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# Book of Abstracts

## Author Index

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**Note:** The Author Index includes all presenting authors and paper co-authors.
Names marked with an asterisk (*) indicate paper co-authors who are not presenting authors.


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# Abstracts

[5] Ann Heirman (Ghent University). *Lice, fleas and bedbugs in Buddhist monasteries: moving from India to China.*

**Abstract.** Buddhist texts generally prohibit the killing or harming of all sentient beings. This is certainly the case in vinaya (disciplinary) texts, which contain strict guidelines on the preservation of all animal life. When these vinaya texts were translated into Chinese, they formed the core of Buddhist behavioral codes, influencing both monastic and lay followers. Medieval Chinese vinaya masters, such as Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667), wrote extensive commentaries and accounts, introducing Indian concepts into the Chinese environment. In this paper, we focus on often neglected sentient beings: namely, some of the world's smallest, but also those most annoying to humans — lice, fleas and bedbugs. Bugs, such as lice, fleas and bedbugs, are indeed not the most pleasant animals to human beings, and as such they easily fall victim of human activities trying to eliminate them. Yet, all of these animals are sentient beings that — according to Buddhist principles — should not be harmed or killed. Accepting them as part of life, including monastic life, comes with some consequences, though. Bedding and clothes can be infected, bodies can be harmed, and life can become very troubled. On top of these challenges, these creatures are very numerous and hard to avoid. What this implies for Chinese vinaya masters is the core question of this paper. How do they deal with these realities? How did they translate the Indian concepts? What about the basic principles of Buddhism they hold in the highest esteem?

**Keywords:** Buddhist monastic life, Vinaya, Animal studies, Bugs

[6] Alina Sinelnyk (Durham University). *Being interethnic between words and photographs: zooming in on Western Chinese portraits in Jeeyun Kim's m<other>.*

**Abstract.** Completed in 2024, m<other> is a fourteen-year-long project by Seoul-born Hong Kong-based artist Jeeyun Kim (born 1974), comprising photographs of people, born to parents of different ethnicities, and their mothers. By focusing on selected portraits, this paper analyses in what ways and to what ends Kim questions what it means to define oneself as an individual with a Western Chinese interethnic background, ranging from Chinese British to Chinese Italian - the group of people that is often omitted from the research on Hong Kong's population, dominated by case studies of monoethnic Han Chinese. The paper begins by reflecting on the photographs' juxtaposition between familial and cultural backgrounds, the use of hybrid media of photography in representing non-monolithic cultural identity, and the role of transcribed interviews with the photographed participants that accompany the selected photographs. The paper concludes by further unpacking the linguistic dimension of m<other> – specifically, how the paired textual and visual portraits both resonate and conflict with one another, highlighting the non-fixedness and multifacetedness of being interethnic. Overall, by zooming in on Kim's portrayal of the underrepresented Western Chinese interethnic group in Hong Kong, the article draws from cultural identity studies, sociology, photography theory and textual studies among others, contributing the first expanded theoretical analysis of m<other>.

**Keywords:** Interethnic identity, Multicultural family, Western Chinese, Hong Kong, Photo-portraiture, Text and images

[8] Fanqi Lin (SOAS). *Mission-Oriented Innovation Policy in China: How Governance Modes Shape Outcomes in the PV and NEV Industries.*

**Abstract.** The global green transition is generating a new techno-economic paradigm in which value creation is increasingly anchored in clean energy and digital technologies. China has sought to capture these opportunities through mission-oriented innovation policy (MOIP), which defines grand challenges—such as decarbonisation and sustainable mobility—as explicit policy missions. Yet despite a unified framework, China's green industries have not evolved along a single path. This paper asks: why do industries subject to the same MOIP yield divergent outcomes depending on their governance modes? To answer this question, the study compares the photovoltaic (PV) and new energy vehicle (NEV) sectors. Both are central to China's green transition and benefit from strong state support, but they developed through contrasting governance arrangements. The PV industry expanded under decentralised, locally driven experimentation that drove down costs and enabled rapid global diffusion. In contrast, the NEV industry advanced under stronger central coordination and a unified national market, achieving technological upgrading and domestic market dominance. The comparison shows that MOIP is not a uniform template but is mediated by sector-specific governance structures. These institutional differences shape outcomes in innovation, market formation, and global competitiveness. The findings highlight how central–local relations,

institutional design, and entry timing jointly condition the effectiveness of green industrial policy in China. By situating PV and NEV within China's broader developmental trajectory, the paper contributes to understanding MOIP in practice, industrial policy in green technology industries, and the political economy of governance in China.
**Keywords:** Mission-Oriented Innovation Policy (MOIP), Industrial Policy, Green Transition, China, Governance, Photovoltaic Industry (PV), New Energy Vehicles (NEV)

[26] Sofia Gaspar (Senior Researcher) and Olga Cojocaru (Post-doc researcher). *Migration as an act of political depression: the case of Chinese wealthy migrants in Portugal.*

**Abstract.** In China, political depression has emerged not only as a psychological condition but also as a culturally embedded affective response shaped by broader socio-political forces, tied to political events and structural alienation. It reveals a sense of desperation, disillusionment, and loss of faith in personal agency, along with an unescapable feeling that work and education are useless. Political depression can manifest amongst adults and younger people. In China, political depression has long been rooted in post-socialist era, especially after the Cultural Revolution to the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and, more recently, the White Paper movement as a contestation of the Zero-Covid policies. Portugal has a relatively stable political system and international relations and has become a "peaceful" immigration destination for many Chinese immigrants for the last decades. This paper aims to understand how migration of Chinese wealthy middle-class citizens to Portugal can be interpreted as an expression of political depression and a form of resistance to intensifying authoritarian control by the Chinese central government, complemented by a declining confidence in the possibility of political transformation. Our data draws from 27 in-depth interviews with 10 male and 17 female participants aged between 27 and 50, along with 32 video diaries recorded quarterly throughout 2024 from 8 participants (3 male and 5 female) who volunteered from the original interviewees. Our results show that, for privileged highly-educated Chinese individuals, migration represents an act of conscious and resilient agency to escape political depression and to quietly distance themselves from their unvoiced critical views on political affairs in China.
**Keywords:** Migration, Political depression, highly educated migrants, Portugal

[28] Xi Liu (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University). *From online novel to stage play: The Trans-media adaptation of Chinese feminist narratives in She's Fed Up.*

**Abstract.** The immensely popular Chinese online novel She's Fed Up (2023), penned by "For Her", chronicles the protagonist—player ID 6237486—as she relentlessly challenges her fate within a virtual realm. Ultimately, she resolutely shatters the game's predetermined choices, thereby unlocking an entirely new and uncharted gaming universe. The novel emulates the established genre conventions of Western fantasy-themed otome games and reverse harem narratives. After establishing a strong sense of familiarity for readers, it subverts expectations through sharp deconstruction and critique, exposing the underlying logic of gender oppression and objectification inherent in such web fiction genres. It thus emerges as a contemporary, locally rooted Chinese feminist narrative exploring female agency and structural oppression.

Adapted into a stage play directed and edited by Chen Tianran, the production commenced a nationwide tour in late 2024, garnering considerable positive reviews (Douban rating: 8.1) and commercial success. The eponymous stage adaptation transforms a "counter-convention" web novel heavily reliant on inner monologues, psychological processes, game system prompts, and omniscient perspectives into a theatrical form confined within limited time and space. It achieves this through live actor performances and stage design while retaining the game's visual allure, undergoing a "cross-media journey from textual novel to video game to theatrical performance" (Li Ran, 2025).

This study examines the cross-media adaptation strategies employed to stage such a work, particularly the transition of narrative focus from internal to external, the visualization and sonification of systems and rules, and the portrayal of female group images and "sisterhood." It examines how the production employs theatre's distinctive tools—narration, soliloquy, physicality, lighting, sound effects, and collective spectatorship—to externalize the text's internalized "weariness" and "awakening" into a profoundly impactful and infectious public performance, deepening and expanding Chinese indigenous feminist narratives within their cross-media journey.
**Keywords:** online novel, stage play, trans-media adaptation, Chinese feminist narratives, She's Fed Up

[40] Chuyu Liu (University of Zurich) and Thao Pham (Vrije Universiteit Brussel). *Between Digital Empires: Chinese State Media's Discourse on the EU's AI Governance.*

**Abstract.** This study examines how the Chinese state media constructs comparative narratives about Western approaches to artificial intelligence governance. Analyzing People's Daily — the Chinese Communist Party's official

newspaper — we investigate how Beijing portrays the EU's AI governance relative to Chinese and American approaches to AI. Our research addresses two critical gaps: the lack of systematic analysis of Chinese perceptions of EU AI regulation, and the tendency to conflate the EU and US as a unified liberal-democratic bloc in global AI governance discourse. Through computational content and sentiment analysis of 2,400 People's Daily articles, we examine how Beijing strategically differentiates between these two regulatory powers. Our sentiment analysis reveals striking asymmetry: EU coverage is overwhelmingly positive, while US reporting balances positive and negative emotions, reflecting deeper ambivalence. Chinese state media portrays the EU as pursuing an autonomous "third way" that emphasizes rights protection, procedural legitimacy, and ethical frameworks, which is diverging from both Chinese techno-authoritarianism and American market liberalism. However, this positive framing masks strategic calculations that question Europe's regulatory flexibility, technological competitiveness, and innovation capacity. This sophisticated narrative enables China to selectively appropriate EU-style legitimacy discourse while advancing "AI governance with Chinese characteristics"—emphasizing performance-oriented governance aligned with national development and technological sovereignty. The ambivalent US portrayal reflects China's complex relationship with American technological power: while Beijing acknowledges the US as a pioneer of AI innovation, it criticizes Washington's fragmented, corporate-dominated regulation. Beijing's tripartite framework strategically positions the EU as a potential partner in challenging US technological hegemony, exploiting transatlantic regulatory divergences to advance China's vision of multipolar AI governance.
**Keywords:** AI, Strategic Narrative, EU, US

[42] Zireng Chen (Nanjing Normal University). *A Philological and Institutional Study of the Miao-suan System in Pre-Qin China: Ritual Decision-Making and the Paradox of Early Democracy.*

**Abstract.** This paper re-examines the miaosuan (廟算, “temple calculations”) system of pre-Qin China, arguing that it was not a mere metaphor for deliberation but a concrete institutional procedure that structured political decision-making. Drawing on the Book of Documents “Ming Yong Ji Yi” (明用稽疑), as well as military texts (Sunzi Bingfa, Weiliaozi), ritual classics (Zhouli, Liji), and archaeological evidence, the study reconstructs the system’s formation and evolution through four analytical dimensions.
First, miaosuan embodied a layered decision process integrating Tortoise Shell Divination and Yarrow Stalk Divination（龟占与蓍筮）， royal judgment, ministerial consultation and popular participation—revealing an early awareness of participatory governance. Second, its setting in the Guoxue (国学， state academy), a space combining ritual, education, and policy deliberation, linked “receiving the mandate in the temple” with “formulating plans in the academy.” Third， By comparing the forms and application scenarios of counting rods（算筹） and yarrow stalks（蓍草）, demonstrating the potential evolutionary relationship between the two tools. Finally, tracing its origins in the Shang dynasty, maturity in the Zhou ritual order, and decline during the Warring States amid Legalist reforms, the paper situates miaosuan within the transformation of early Chinese political culture. Ultimately, it argues that the miaosuan system embodied an embryonic form of deliberative participation.
**Keywords:** Miao-suan system, Ritual and divinatory decision-making, Philological and institutional analysis, Limited democracy, Political culture

[43] Yadi Wang (Wuhan University). *On the Formation of the Literary-Ethnographic Style in The Last Quarter of the Moon.*

**Abstract.** This essay distinguishes two ethnographic paradigms in readings of Chi Zijian’s The Last Quarter of the Moon: field ethnography and literary ethnography. Engaging debates by Qu Feng and Zhang Jianfei, it argues that Chi maintains an intentional, lyrically mediated “distance” from her subject, crafting a literary ethnography that recomposes documentary materials rather than reproducing an emic, field-based account. The essay identifies “textual fissures”—for example, the falconer Daxy and the prominence of “mountain pheasants” over hazel grouse—that signal interethnic borrowings and departures from Ewenki lifeworlds. At the macro level, the novel purifies Ewenki culture around shamanism by subtracting Russian Orthodox and Han influences while aggregating neighboring minority elements, symbolized by Nadezhda’s cross and her flight. Chi’s method replaces immersive fieldwork with affective embrace—“cultivating feeling” and writing swiftly in seclusion—thereby reshaping nature and religion through a modern ecological sensibility: stern spirit-beings (e.g., the fire deity) are softened into vulnerable, relational agents. The symphonic “one day, a century” design aligns poetically (if not ethnographically) with solar time, casting the Ewenki sun as a receding indigenous horizon. Finally, contrasting gun motifs (a hunter evading disarmament vs. a man firing at logging trucks) shows how the novel recodes tools of subsistence into emblems of resistance, affirming literature’s this-worldly stance.

**Keywords:** literary ethnography, Ewenki, shamanism, textual fissures, ecological sensibility

[44] Anabela Santiago (CEI-Iscte / GOVCOPP - University of Aveiro). *Analysis of the Implementation of Policy Recommendations and their Outcomes in Sino-European Health Projects: the Cases of SENET and IC-PerMed.*

**Abstract.** The increasing global interdependence in the health sector demands reinforced networks of cooperation between nations and rigorous evaluations of the effectiveness of derived international projects. Both Europe and China are key players in global health governance. They can benefit from collaboration as they can exchange knowledge and good practices for facing some common health challenges, domestically or regarding global public health. This study investigates the implementation and outcomes of policy recommendations derived from health cooperation projects between Europe and China, focusing on the period from 2019 to 2023.

Based on an analysis of the strategic documents of two joint projects – SENET and IC-PerMed – the research evaluates adherence to the recommendations outlined in action plans and their outcomes through document analysis and stakeholder interviews. The aim is to map the achievements and identify the gaps between recommendations and practical outcomes. The study also examines the cultural, administrative, and political challenges impacting international collaboration and identifies best practices that can be replicated in other global contexts. The findings contribute to refining public policies for health cooperation, promoting more efficient use of funds, enhancing health systems, and strengthening future collaborations between Europe and China, particularly in the scientific and health domains. This research provides valuable insights into maximizing the impact of collaborative projects and expanding global innovation capacity in health through Sino-European cooperation.

**Keywords:** global health, health policies, Sino-European cooperation, SENET, IC-PerMed

[52] Hui Miao (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University). *Woman as Killer: The Chinese animated horror SHe.*

**Abstract.** Representation of women and their negotiation with the patriarchal system is one of the key thematic concerns in Chinese cinema today. The female images provided are mostly from family or heterosexual relationship-themed films where female characters still negotiate within patriarchal and hierarchical parameters whether in fictional or documentary films. There is a general lack of studies on diverse female characters.

SHe (Nü ta, 2018) (Fig. 1) is an animated horror and the debut feature of Chinese director Zhou Shengwei, which breaks new ground not least by focussing on woman as killer. The film tells the story of a deadly killing female symbolised by a mother shoe and situates the story in a world of fantasy of grotesque colours and images, which combine together to visually unlock the cultural fear which is otherwise hidden in the narrative of films concerned with patriarchy. The film represents the reproduction fear of Chinese women living with the family planning policy changes in recent years. The oppressions and suppression become materialised and concretised through the combination of animation and horror genre marked by monstrosity and brutality.

From a feminist perspective the representation of the killing mother in the film centres on and criticizes the ambivalence of power relations in the patriarchal system, while also suggesting an unquestionable vision of a utopian transformation from a patriarchal society to a matriarchal one at a cost of a gendered portrayal of women within a male-centred power epistemology.

**Keywords:** Chinese, women, reproduction fear, animated horror, family planning poilicy

[55] Giulia Sciorati (London School of Economics and Political Science). *Tifa as Discursive Infrastructure: Commercialising China's Authoritarian Practices in a Market Economy of Meaning.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines how tifa (提法) - fixed political formulations in Chinese official discourse - function as discursive borders that shape how China's governance model is communicated abroad. While tifa are often seen as instruments of domestic ideological control, they also operate transnationally, structuring the meanings through which China presents its political system as coherent, adaptable, and exportable. By codifying state-sanctioned ideas of stability, order, and development, tifa make authoritarian governance appealing to external audiences. The analysis focuses on tifa used in China's responses to political unrest in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. These moments of instability in neighbouring authoritarian regimes provide opportunities for Beijing to reaffirm the resilience and desirability of its own model. Drawing on statements from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Chinese embassies, and state media, the paper traces how tifa circulate across different registers of foreign-facing discourse. Using an interpretive and comparative approach, it classifies tifa by function and examines how they contribute to the transnational commercialisation of China's governance model. The paper argues that tifa stabilise ideological boundaries while marketising governance itself as a political product.

**Keywords:** tifa, China, autocracy promotion, Central Asia, narrative theory

[66] Oriana Mastro (Stanford University). *China-Russia Security Alignment: Evolution, Drivers and Implications for Liberal International Order.*

**Abstract.** What is the nature of Sino-Russian alignment, its main drivers, and evolution since 1949? Which historical factors have influenced the relationship most? How does this alignment impact peace, stability, and the liberal international order? To address these questions, this paper examines the historical evolution of Sino-Russian military alignment from 1949 to present. While both have consistently influenced US and allied security, the extent of their coordination has shifted, from Cold War allies to adversaries in the 1970s-1980s, before improving relations after 2002. Building on alliance theory, the paper introduces a framework designed to better capture great-power alignment, distinguishing between two forms of behavior: 1) how countries help build each other's independent ability to fight, 2) how they might strengthen their joint fighting capabilities. Using primary and archival sources in Chinese, Russian, and English, the study categorizes three historical phases of Sino-Russian relations: comrades in arms (1949-1969), communist rivals and neutrality (1969-2001), and deep alignment (2001-2024), and identifies key moments when the partnership deepened or weakened. It assesses the relative influence of major drivers, including ideational factors, domestic political considerations, capacity building, and balancing of power and wedges like ideological disputes, border conflicts, asymmetry, and differing approaches to the US and world order. Preliminary findings suggest that while domestic politics play a limited role, historical experiences of hierarchy, mistrust, and external pressure have deeply shaped both powers' strategic calculus. The study contributes to understanding the historical foundations of Sino-Russian cooperation and its implications for continuity and change in the global order.

**Keywords:** Sino-Russian relations, Cold War history, China-Soviet split, Great power rivalry, Alliance theory

[72] Hongyujia Wang (Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology). *Echoes of Symbolism: The Reception and Qiao-Yi Dynamic of French Symbolist Poets in China from 1919 to 1937.*

**Abstract.** This study explores the reception of French Symbolism in China and the Qiao-Yi 僑易 phenomenon from 1919 to 1937. Centering on Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud and Mallarmé, the study examines how their works underwent translation (Qiao 僑) and transformation (Yi 易) in China. By analyzing Republican-era journal publications and comparing findings with the practices of Chinese poets such as Dai Wangshu 戴望舒 (1905–1950), Wen Yiduo 聞一多 (1899–1946), and Bian Zhilin 卞之琳 (1910–2000), the study reveals that within the framework of Symbolism, Baudelaire and Verlaine emerged as a group more readily accepted, retaining relatively intact original characteristics, while Rimbaud and Mallarmé formed another group whose essence was significantly stripped, with fewer echoes in Chinese poetry. From the perspective of the dissemination of French Symbolism, its localization was not merely a unidirectional process of reception but a Qiao-Yi phenomenon—an interplay whereby heterogeneous cultures modified or compromised themselves to align with China's cultural transformations of the time. From the angle of Chinese poetry's development, the Qiao-Yi dynamic of French Symbolism reflects how Chinese modern poetry, while superficially rejecting tradition, deeply internalized traditional aesthetics to refashion foreign elements. This underscores the suppressed yet resilient literary self-awareness of Chinese aesthetic traditions when confronting Western modernity.

**Keywords:** French symbolist poets, Qiao-Yi 僑易, reception, new poetry

[76] Jingbo Hua (PhD Candidate). *Professionalization as Control: The Social Work Department and the Future of Grassroots NGOs in China.*

**Abstract.** The Chinese Communist Party's newly established Social Work Department (SWD) raises fundamental questions about what the Party seeks from grassroots NGOs and how these organizations interpret and respond to institutional change. This article addresses these questions using the biographical dataset of central and provincial SWD leaders and thirty interviews with NGO leaders. The findings reveal the SWD as a novel instrument that is drawn largely from civil affairs officials long involved in managing social organizations, petitioning cadres responsible for public grievances, and security personnel linked to stability maintenance. This composition embeds a bureaucratic logic oriented toward regulation, grievance management, and political control, channelled through professionalized NGO workers redefined as social workers. From the NGO perspective, the SWD provokes ambivalent expectations that some anticipate stable funding, clearer regulatory frameworks, and enhanced professionalism, while others foresee intensified depoliticization, reduced autonomy, and mission drift toward state-defined service provision. The evidence suggests that the SWD embodies a strategy of "administrative

incorporation," transforming grassroots NGOs into para-state service providers while reinforcing their enduring dilemma of navigating between organisational survival and autonomy. The article contributes to debates on authoritarian civil society by showing how institutional design and cadre placement function as instruments of political control.
**Keywords:** Grassroots NGOs, Authoritarian governance, Administrative incorporation, Civil society in China, State-society relations

[88] Sau Wah Ng (University of Macau). *Transcultural Materialities: Reimagining Chinese Aesthetics in Hong Kong Installation Art of the 20th Century.*
**Abstract.** This paper examines the development of Hong Kong installation art in the 20th century as a transcultural artistic language forged through cross-cultural exchange, material experimentation, and reimagined Chinese aesthetics. Situated between Chinese cultural traditions and international modernist movements, Hong Kong's art scene provided fertile ground for experimentation with materials, symbols, and spatial forms that embodied both local sensibility and cosmopolitan perspective. Artists redefined customary media—such as ink, bamboo, and calligraphic composition—through combinations with found industrial objects, ephemeral materials, and performative gestures, generating a new visual idiom for articulating identity and belonging in a rapidly transforming city.
Through case studies of Wong Shun-kit 王純杰, Frog King 蛙王(郭孟浩), Choi Hoi Ying 蔡海鷹, and Stanley Wong 黃炳培 (Anothermountainman 又一山人), the paper examines how installation became a language of negotiation between aesthetic systems traditionally associated with Chinese culture and the influences of global conceptual and experimental art. These artists used heterogeneous materials—red-white-blue fabric, water, ink, and urban fragments—to construct environments that explore fluidity, plurality, and spatial consciousness.
The study argues that Hong Kong installation art exemplifies a form of cultural translation that transforms inherited visual traditions into globally communicable expressions. By merging Chinese artistic values with transnational modes of making and thinking, Hong Kong artists have developed a unique, transcultural language that repositions the city as a vital interlocutor in the global narrative of contemporary art.
**Keywords:** Installation Art, Hong Kong, Transcultural or Cross-cultural, Ink, Mixed-Media

[89] Wu Jiajie (Sichuan Fine Art Institute). *The Ghosts of Frontier Governance and Faith: On Ritual Ethnography and the Politics of Belief in Zhuang Xueben's Photographs of Yi nationality' funeral in Xikang During the War of Resistance —With a Discussion on Hidden Traces in Modern Nation-Building.*
**Abstract.** As a pioneer of visual ethnography in China, Zhuang Xueben undertook grand tour in the 1930s and 1940s to explore frontier regions in western China, immersing himself among ethnic groups such as the Qiang, Yi, and Tibetan peoples. He documented and photographed the enduring unique ethnic religious cultures and belief systems prevalent in these remote areas, reflecting the distinctive cultural identity and sense of social community forged among diverse ethnic groups through prolonged interaction. During his "travel photography" period (1937-1941), he produced a vast body of visual ethnographies of western ethnic groups. Combined with his Report on the Yi People of Xikang, this "text-image" travelogue structure co-constructed a new system of knowledge production and ideal politics: frontier narratives and national imagination. Simultaneously, Zhuang Xueben covertly adopted a visual methodology grounded in religious experience within his western ethnographic photography practice. By leveraging specific linguistic media and visual vocabularies, he rendered visible the sacred rituals and belief systems of western ethnic groups while disseminating them. This process crystallized them into culturally potent symbols capable of counteracting the modernizing forces of politics, thereby propelling knowledge toward forging new attitudes toward frontiers, ethnicities, and the nation—namely, a national paradigm and ideology centered on the Chinese ethnic community. Ritual performance and religious belief offer a transparent portal into the internal workings of culture, power relations, historical transformation, and cognition. This paper therefore examines, based on Zhuang Xueben's religious visual archives and material culture of the Yi people's funeral ritual, how Yi rituals interact with the times, and how frontier orders represented by Xikang were articulated through the politics of belief during the modern nation-state's generational evolution. It further explores the reciprocal relationship between photography and scholarship, as well as between images and texts, within the nationalist framework.
**Keywords:** Zhuang Xueben, Funeral ritual Photography, Faith, National Imagination, The Investigation Report of Yi Nationality in Xikang

[91] Rosalien van der Poel (Wereldmuseum Leiden). *Colourful Paintings from 18th-Century Guangzhou.*

**Abstract.** Colourful Paintings from 18th-Century Guangzhou
In this presentation Van der Poel will talk about two volumes in the series Historical Documents of the Guangzhou Port in the Qing Dynasty 重磅出版|《清代广州口岸历史文献丛编》（第二辑）published by the Guangdong People's Publishing House in June 2025.
These two Chinese-English bilingual volumes, entitled Selected Works from the Royer Collection: Qing Dynasty Export Paintings from Guangzhou in the Leiden World Museum, Netherlands, show 608 water colours from 22 of the most exciting albums, collected by the Dutch lawyer Jean Theodore Royer (1737-1807) in the 1770s. These albums with images of people practicing various professions, portrayals of 'minority' people in their costumes, historical figures from novels, mythological figures, Taoist gods, arts and crafts practicioners, street performers, theatre figures, and more, are excellent examples of artworks, which had various sources of inspiration with which the Chinese export painters 'played' freely. This series of Royer albums surpasses the American and English collections, not only in its uniqueness of execution (distinct colour-use and detailed rendition), in their antecedence and their earliness of production, but also in number. They can serve as influential benchmarks in the international discourse.
In this presentation Van der Poel will give a glimpse behind the scenes of the production and the content of this book project, that had its first seeds planted in 2014.
**Keywords:** Chinese export painting, 18th century, Museum collection, Chinese art, Material culture, Exchange East-West

[99] Miao Jia (University of Göttingen). *Psy Disciplines and the Reconfiguration of Mental Illness in Republican China: Xia Zhenyi, Neurasthenia, and Mental Hygiene.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines the localization of the psy disciplines in Republican China through the writings of the psychiatrist Xia Zhenyi (1915–2004). Focusing on Xia's essays and translations from the 1940s, it asks how psychoanalysis, psychobiology, and mental hygiene provided new ways of interpreting mental illness in a medical field shaped by neurology, biomedicine, and traditional Chinese medicine. The paper first situates Xia within two major channels of transmission: Fanny Halpern's work in Shanghai, and the Meyerian psychobiological tradition introduced through Richard S. Lyman and Peking Union Medical College. It then analyzes how Xia used these ideas to reinterpret neurasthenia, a widely discussed diagnosis in modern China. Rather than understanding neurasthenia as nervous weakness, sexual depletion, or a purely somatic disorder, Xia described it in terms of personality, emotion, family upbringing, social pressure, and maladjustment. This psycho-social framework allowed him to challenge existing medical explanations while presenting psy knowledge as part of modern scientific medicine. Finally, the paper shows that Xia's understanding of mental illness was closely tied to his advocacy of mental hygiene. For him, preventing mental illness required not only treatment but also education, family reform, social adjustment, and the cultivation of healthy personality. By examining Xia's case, this paper shows how psy disciplines were selectively interpreted and mobilized by Chinese medical intellectuals to rethink disease, subjectivity, medicine, and social modernization in Republican China.
**Keywords:** Psy disciplines, Psychiatry, Mental hygiene, Xia Zhenyi, Modern China

[100] Yuqi Jin (University of Auckland). *"Collective Construction, Affective Excitation"(群情激奮): The Century-Long Journey of the Concept of Stimulants in the Modern China (1858–1950).*

**Abstract.** This study examines the introduction, establishment, standardization, and popularization of the concept of "stimulants" (興奮劑) in modern China between 1858 and 1950. The cross-cultural journey of stimulants unfolded through four overlapping stages. In the late nineteenth century, medical missionaries and their Chinese collaborators were the first to bring the idea in. They reinterpreted it through existing Chinese medical frameworks, using expressions like "fire-tonifying agents" to make this new pharmacological category intelligible. Around the same time, Japan coined the term "stimulants" in Chinese characters and linked it to everyday substances. By the early 20th century, Chinese physicians and scholars who had learned Western medicine through Japan adopted it as a formal medical term. Outside medicine, with the expansion of commerce and print culture, the concept moved beyond clinical settings into mass media, popular culture, political discourse, n and everyday life in modern China. This conceptual history of stimulants was never a simple story of Western knowledge replacing Chinese tradition. It emerged from encounters among Chinese, Western, and Japanese medical knowledge and practices and was shaped by continuous processes of negotiation, contestation, and creative adaptation. By tracing the transnational travel and local reconfiguration of stimulants, this study offers a lens on knowledge transformation, changing

concepts of the body, and the lived experience of modernity in modern China.
**Keywords:** Stimulants, Conceptual History, Knowledge Journey, Encounter between Chinese and Western Medicine, Modern China

[106] Hoi Yan Chu (University of Hong Kong; King's College London). *Reimagination of Nature and Culture through Interspecies and Animal Writing: A Comparative Reading on Zhang Wei and Lin Zhao.*
**Abstract.** In an era marked by rapid techno-biological advancements, traditional approaches of humanism are increasingly questioned to be undercut by its traditional frameworks, urging new ways of evaluating art and humanity. One such approach involves adopting animal and interspecies perspectives to offer alternative pathways beyond a human-centric worldview. Zhang Wei's Songs from the Forest (2007) and Lin Zhao's Tidal Atlas (2022) provide two compelling examples: the former spotlights social changes in early 21st-century China through its interspecies narrative, while the latter imagines a frog's adventure in the 19th-century China from a 21st-century perspective.
Through a close reading of these two novels, this paper argues that their animal and interspecies writing not only creates an open space for rethinking animality and nature, but also intersects with socio-cultural discourses, capturing the emerging context of China. On one hand, these novels challenge the anthropocentric framework by attributing active autonomy to animals in various ways. On the other hand, their animal narratives reveal distinctive contemplations on localism, cultural identity, and Chineseness. In Zhang's writing, the gradual retreat of animality in interspecies hybrid characters is metaphorized as a critique of the state-led market economy and globalization in the millennium, calling for a return to indigenous cultural roots. Conversely, Lin's animal writing employs the continual geographical transgression of the frog heroine's body to question fixed cultural roots through a cosmopolitan tidalectic lens. A comparatively reading of these texts illustrates the development of nonhuman writing as a literary strategy and highlights its complex interaction with 21st-century Chinese contexts.
**Keywords:** contemporary Chinese literature, animal writing, posthumanism, ecocriticism

[112] Mei-Yen Lee (National Pingtung University). *Examining the Cultural Significance of Late Ming Literati Gatherings through Exalted Gathering in the Green Woods in the Minneapolis Institute of Art.*
**Abstract.** The Exalted Gathering in the Green Woods （〈青林高會圖〉） in the Minneapolis Institute of Art is attributed to the late Ming painter Dong Qichang （1555–1636）. The painting depicts the social interactions of Yan Tianchi, a renowned guqin（seven-stringed zither）master from Jiangsu Province, China, and six contemporary literati, including calligraphers, painters, Pure Land Buddhist masters, opera performers, and Confucian scholars. It serves as a visual medium through which the intercultural and intellectual interactions of late Ming literati can be examined.
By examining the painting alongside the writings of the depicted figures, this study explores the cultural significance of literati gatherings in the late Ming dynasty. However, the painting raises an important question: although the Minneapolis Museum of Art attributes the work to Dong Qichang, the inscription on Exalted Gathering in the Green Woods presents evident problems in both style and content. Although several scholars have questioned the attribution of this painting, convincing arguments remain scarce. This paper will first re-examine the work through an analysis of both the inscription and the imagery in order to clarify this issue. It will then explore the cultural significance of late Ming literati gatherings as reflected in this painting.
**Keywords:** the Minneapolis Museum of Art, Exalted Gathering in the Green Woods, late Ming dynasty, literati gathering, leisurely life

[115] Yitao Qian (SOAS, University of London). *Fakes or Fine Specimens? Constructing Authenticity of Chinese paintings at the British Museum 1880 - 1910.*
**Abstract.** It is a long-standing but often overlooked issue that many Chinese paintings collected by major Western museums in the nineteenth century face authenticity concerns, including questionable attributions and forged seals. Were these works simply forgeries made to satisfy Western tastes for financial gains? By examining how these collections were formed, we can begin to rethink the narratives surrounding them. This paper explores the early reception and study of Chinese paintings in the UK through the case of the British Museum, with a focus on authenticity. In 1880, the British Museum acquired its first significant group of Chinese paintings—105 pieces—from William Anderson. This collection was rather an attachment to his much larger group of over 3,000 Japanese paintings. For Anderson, Chinese paintings served primarily as reference points to illustrate the development and supremacy of Japanese art. The museum's 1903 purchase of the Admonitions Scroll sparked a lasting debate over

authenticity between Western and Japanese experts. While agreed as a copy, the scroll's contested status raised new concerns about the authenticity of other Chinese works in the British Museum's collection. Despite these doubts, the museum expanded its holdings in 1910 by acquiring 132 Chinese paintings from Olga-Julia Wegener. The British Museum's collecting history reveals how notions of authenticity in Chinese painting were constructed through complex internal and external influences. Rather than dismissing these works as mere forgeries, this paper argues that they offer insight into the narrative authenticity of receiving Chinese paintings in the UK.
**Keywords:** Chinese paintings, authenticity, specimen

[123] Qian Du (City University of Hong Kong), Doudou Ma (Xiamen University) and Xinyue Deng (City University of Hong Kong). *Diaspora, Adaptation, and Innovation: Cross-cultural Creativity of Sinophone Cinema.*

**Abstract.** In recent decades, the global influence of the Chinese film industry has grown remarkably, achieving notable success both at the box office and in international film festivals. From silent films to talkies and now to digital cinema, the global landscape has constantly evolved. Meanwhile, Chinese and Chinese diaspora filmmakers consistently make films that transcend geographical boundaries. While studying and engaging with film, an art form that originated in the West, Sinophone filmmakers have also cultivated their own distinct and vibrant creative styles.

This panel centers on the cross-cultural practice of Sinophone Cinema, spanning from early films to the border-crossing flows of Sinophone films among various regions following China's reform and opening up. It also examines the dynamic relationship between Sinophone Cinema and globalization. The panel will deliver presentations in a chronological order. Du Qian explores the genealogy of transnational women film pioneers in early Sinophone cinema, revealing the female creativity that has been overlooked by mainstream film history. Yang Jianqiu and Zheng Kaiming examine the impact of Western culture on Chinese films, particularly through the adaptation and creativity of breakdance films directed by Chinese filmmakers. Ma Doudou compares the aesthetic styles of Hong Kong action movies before and after 1997, delving into the cultural connotations behind the shifts in film aesthetics during this transitional period. Deng Xinyue examines the development of Chinese comedy films after the marketization of Chinese film industry, and how to use humor to discuss identity crisis in the context of globalization.
**Keywords:** Sinophone Cinema, cross-cultural filmmaking, transnational creativity, globalization

**Qian Du (City University of Hong Kong)** – *Ocean-crossing Waves of Women Filmmakers in Early Sinophone Cinema*
For a long time, the film industry has been characterized as a male-dominated field, particularly with regard to the predominance of white males. However, in the early cinema, "flexibility" was one of the Keywords in film productions, which involved various experiments. With the restoration of early films and the digitization of historical materials, more and more women filmmakers have been rediscovered. Among these women film pioneers, Sinophone women filmmakers have constantly navigated boundaries, and their cross-cultural filmmaking careers have provided unique models for feminist film historiography. This paper provides a chronological overview of ocean-crossing Sinophone women filmmakers from 1916 to 1949. The periodization has involved the transformation from silent to sound films, spanning two World Wars and the inter-war period, encountering both racial and regional discrimination policies during the historical upheavals, and the awakening and liberation of women. With the interdisciplinary methodological innovations in feminist historiography, this paper not only focuses on textual analysis of films and investigations in the film industry, but also explores the influences of historical vicissitudes on the careers of these pioneering women. Through the weaving of the genealogy of Sinophone women, this paper also discusses the following questions. What led to the transnational trajectories of Sinophone women film pioneers? How did they sustain their film creativity? Why were they forgotten in mainstream film history? Through the research on women film pioneers, this paper also reflects on the dilemmas and possibilities of contemporary Sinophone women filmmakers.

**Doudou Ma (Xiamen University)** – *The Disappearance of Heroes: Aesthetic and Identity Transformation in Hong Kong Action Cinema Before and After 1997*
Before and after the 1997 handover, Hong Kong action cinema underwent significant aesthetic and narrative transformations, reflecting collective anxieties and cultural displacement amid political transition and identity restructuring. Representative pre-1997 films, such as A Better Tomorrow (1986), contrast sharply with post-1997 works including Too many ways to be NO.1 (1997), and The Mission (1999), revealing a shift from romantic heroism to austere, minimalist realism. First, visual aesthetics transformed: pre-1997 action inherited 1980s gangster

cinema's expressionism, using speed, intensity, and choreographed spectacle to construct myths of brotherhood; post-1997 works emphasize minimalism, calmness, and restraint, with compressed action, ritualized violence, and silent, static compositions. Directors such as Johnnie To reconfigure violence through spatial voids, producing dialectical fields of order and disorder. Second, characters and identity structures changed: pre-1997 heroes embodied traditional chivalric ethics and urban glory, while post-1997 figures face identity drift, moral ambiguity, and fractured subjectivity, confirming Abbas' concept of a "culture of disappearance". Finally, from cultural and ideological perspectives, the austerity, detachment, and de-heroization of post-1997 films indicate ongoing societal anxieties regarding power, belonging, and the uncertain future. Howard Y. F. Choy notes that cinematic representations of violence and order reflect Hong Kong's ambivalent position within discourses of "Chineseness", where the "return" constitutes a re-colonization of Cantonese culture by Mainland China. The pre- and post-1997 comparison reveals a cultural and social shift from emotionally charged heroic narratives to reflexive, critically engaged cinematic language.

**Xinyue Deng (City University of Hong Kong)** – *Chinese Comedy and Identity under Globalization: From Be There or Be Square (1998) to Detective Chinatown 2 (2018)*

The marketization of film in 1993 and the 1994 introduction of revenue-sharing Hollywood imports reshaped the Chinese film industry. Comedy, long marginalized in the socialist era, re-emerged in the 1990s in response to Hollywood and remained a box-office mainstay in the following decades. This paper examines how Chinese comedy negotiates national identity under globalization by pairing two films. Be There or Be Square (1998) serves as an early template: it stages early immigrant issues around visa and labor and uses everyday ingenuity to build a popular imaginary of the "abroad" and migrants' place within it. Detective Chinatown 2 (2018) scales up the formula with Hollywood buddy-cop and crime routines with level-up visual effects and exportable gags that package "Chineseness" as a humorous spectacle.

Combining close reading with industrial and contextual analysis, and drawing on Anderson (1983)'s "imagined communities" and Callahan (2010)'s "pessoptimist nation", the paper analyzes how domestic comedies mobilize humor mechanisms and generic conventions to explore China's position in the world-system, while tracking shifts in attitudes and behavior that such encounters provoke. I argue that this mode of comedy operates as a flexible technology of identity negotiation: It renders sensitive issues legible in a light, playful register, and makes belonging/difference vivid through overseas settings. However, the same pleasures that enabled this work also heightened its consumability. As Chinese comedy becomes a mainstream blockbuster form, it is increasingly folded into commercial and state-aligned discourses.

[124] Yanan Liu (Sun Yat-sen University). *Insanity, Modernity, and Empire: The Kerr Hospital in Guangzhou's Social Landscape, 1898–1937.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines the Guangzhou John G. Kerr Hospital for the Insane, China's first modern psychiatric asylum, from 1898 to 1937, as a lens on changing practices and concepts of mental illness in modern China. Moving beyond institutional description, the study asks how Western medical paradigms, missionary reform agendas, and local social norms converged and clashed within the asylum. It addresses three questions. First, what institutional logic motivated the hospital's founding, how was its hybrid funding organized, and in what ways did moral treatment and isolation operate as forms of medical discipline and social control? Second, how did contemporary press and public discourse receive the asylum, revealing a mix of stigma, familial desperation, humanitarian hope, and fears of foreign intrusion? Third, how did the hospital contribute to an epistemological shift from moral and supernatural explanations of madness toward a medicalized identity of the mental patient? Drawing on archival records, annual reports, missionary journals, and newspaper accounts, the paper argues that the Kerr Hospital was not a simple transplant of Western models but a contested space that both shaped and was reshaped by tensions in China's medical modernization. The asylum thus served simultaneously as an instrument of discipline and an unprecedented, if imperfect, refuge, reshaping social and clinical responses to insanity in early twentieth century China.

**Keywords:** history of Chinese psychiatry, social control, psychiatric institutionalization, modernization

[125] Lu Li (The University of Hong Kong). *Transmedia Fantasy: Database and Gamified Narrative in Chinese Generation Z Fiction.*

**Abstract.** This paper uses Chinese Generation Z fiction as an entry point for exploring the database and gamified narratives in contemporary Chinese literature, particularly in the genre of Chinese online fantasy novels. Drawing on Lev Manovich's concept of "database narrative", Marie-Laure Ryan's perspective of "interactive narratology",

and using Japanese otaku culture studies, represented by Hiroki Azuma's theories of "database consumption" and "gamelike realism," as a frame of reference, it analyzes The Scum Villain's Self-Saving System (2014, Mo Xiang Tong Xiu) and The Guide to Capturing a Black Lotus (2018, Bai Yu Zhai Diao Gong), along with their transmedia adaptations. The paper identifies three manifestations of these narratives: the emergence of story forms influenced by role-playing games and text adventure games, including "Chuan Shu" (transmigrating into a book), "Gong Lüe" (strategy guide), and "Xi Tong" (system); the reorganization of narrative codes such as plot, character, and cultural codes into tag-based databases through platform taxonomies; and the prevalence of non-linear, reversible, and branching temporalities, as well as parallel universes, loops, and multiple playthroughs. The article argues that since the 1990s, the transplantation of diverse foreign media forms and the shift from mechanical to digital reproduction have fundamentally reshaped narrative modes in Chinese fiction. Database and gamified narration not only structure literary production and consumption but also function as socially generative forces. By linking, transforming, and presenting information across media, they profoundly participate in the production of cultural narratives and public meaning within Chinese society.

**Keywords:** Transmedia, Chinese Online Fantasy Novels, Database Narrative, Gamified Narrative, Generation Z

[127] Greg Sharpe (Aston University). *Can Non-Chinese Effectively "Tell China's Story Well?".*

**Abstract.** Since 2013, when Xi Jinping emphasised the importance of "telling China's story well," a significant amount of research has examined how China conducts its Public Diplomacy. Specifically, extant research often analyses how China communicates with foreign publics through its state media and state-operated social media. However, less attention has been paid to how non-state actors can tell China's stories well.

Digitalisation means the world is more inter-connected than ever before and has allowed non-state actors more influence in international communications. In many countries this has allowed non-state actors to become effective public diplomats. However in China, due in part to the network environment restricting access to international social media, Chinese citizens rarely engage directly with foreign audiences. This phenomenon contributes to China's non-state public diplomacy gap.

In recent years, this gap is being filled by a growing number of non-Chinese social media influencers who have begun endorsing China and the Chinese Communist Party's governance abroad, with British citizens representing the largest proportion of these actors (Cho-li, 2025). Yet, it remains unclear whether such non-Chinese messengers effectively convey China's intended narratives, or whether their messages are perceived as more credible or persuasive than those disseminated by Chinese state media.

This study employs a 2×2 factorial experimental design to compare British audiences' perceptions of China's state-produced messaging versus content shared by British China endorsing influencers. The analysis assesses differences in participants' views regarding the perceived credibility, authenticity, and persuasiveness of these different public diplomacy messengers.

**Keywords:** Soft Power, Public Diplomacy, Non-State Actors, Social Media Influencers, International Communication

[130] Laura Locatelli (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia) and Alessia Iurato (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia). *Reconsidering verb compatibility constraints in the Chinese 被 bèi passive construction: A corpus-assisted investigation of emotional verbs.*

**Abstract.** Linguistic inquiries into the Chinese bèi passive construction (BPC) have long claimed the incompatibility of this structure with stative verbs like 爱 ài 'love' due to their lack of disposal [3], telicity [4], or due to their connotation [5]. Recent usage-based research has begun to challenge this view [1] [2], showing that such verbs can, in fact, appear in passive constructions. However, questions remain regarding which psychological verbs are compatible, whether they retain their original semantics, and how their distribution has evolved diachronically.

Through a combined quantitative and qualitative approach, this study investigates the compatibility of emotional verbs (EVs) with the BPC, focusing on Experiencer-as-Subject verbs, with the aim of examining (i) their distribution in the construction, (ii) whether they maintain their lexical semantics or acquire the typical adversative connotation, and (iii) diachronic changes in their frequency. A dataset of 31 EVs was analyzed using three large-scale corpora: BBC and ZhTenTen for synchronic analysis, and CCL for a preliminary diachronic investigation.

Results show that all selected EVs occur in the BPC, with consistent corpus distribution and attestations dating back to the early 20th century, where the six most common EVs tend to occur in unstructured textual contexts. Additionally, a positive correlation emerges between the verb's lexical meaning and the semantic interpretation of the BPC, revealing frequent non-adverse usages and challenging claims of inherent semantic incompatibility. We argue that these patterns can plausibly be attributed to a set of interacting factors—including grammaticalization

processes, contact-induced change—thereby calling for a re-evaluation of traditional accounts of the verb constraints of the BPC.

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**Keywords:** Chinese 被 bèi passive construction, emotional verbs, stative verbs, verb compatibility constraints

[131] Adam Lifshey (Georgetown University). *Sinophone Cinema from Argentina: The Films of Juan Martín Hsu.*

**Abstract.** In 2021, a film appeared in Argentina that was set and shot in Taiwan, led by a Taiwanese cast, supported by the Ministry of Culture of Taiwan, and named after the most famous Taiwanese song of all time. The director was Juan Martín Hsu, a son of Taiwanese immigrants in Buenos Aires. The title of his film, La luna representa mi corazón, was the Spanish translation of the Teresa Teng ballad better known as 月亮代表我的心. Hsu's movie, a mix of documentary realism and fiction, followed his Diamante Mandarín of 2015, a meticulous art-house short about a Chinese family who owns a grocery store in Argentina. Virtually all the dialogue in Diamante Mandarín takes place in Mandarin, and its aesthetics are highly reminiscent of films by Tsai Ming-liang, yet the film is set entirely in Buenos Aires. Hsu's cinematic attempts to yoke Taiwanese and Argentine worlds together convey sinophone worlds in unexpected contexts to viewers, who are consequently charged with interpreting them in ways that somehow span the planet. An aesthetics of antipodality is therefore inherent in Hsu's films, an aesthetics that entails juxtaposing opposite ends of the earth in an effort to generate meaning that arises beyond all borders and divisions. In my talk, I will argue that Hsu, via this aesthetics of antipodality, offers new understandings of what transnational sinophone cinema can be.

**Keywords:** Sinophone cinema, Taiwan, Argentina, Juan Martín Hsu, The Moon Represents My Heart

[137] Janka Balázs (ELTE Eötvös Loránd University). *The Contemporary Practice of Fangsheng in Taiwan: Religious Interpretations and Ecological Challenges.*

**Abstract.** Fangsheng 放生, often translated as 'mercy release' or 'life release', is a popular Mahāyāna Buddhist ritual with Chinese cultural origins. The main objective of the ritual is to purchase smaller-sized captive animals and ceremonially release them into the wild. While the doctrinal rationale for the practice lies in cultivating compassion (cibei 慈悲), practitioners also partake in the ritual to accumulate spiritual merit and positive karma—an aspect that makes fangsheng attractive to many lay believers.

In recent decades, however, fangsheng has also attracted considerable negative attention. Critics have pointed to its significant ecological consequences, particularly the introduction of potentially invasive species to unfitting environments. This has led to a contemporary debate over whether the ritual can still be considered a legitimate religious practice or if it tarnishes the image of Buddhists in society. This paper analyzes the discourse of Taiwanese Buddhist leaders in response to controversies surrounding fangsheng, seeking answers to the following questions: What are the different attitudes toward fangsheng as a contemporary Buddhist practice in Taiwan? How do prominent Buddhist individuals respond to its criticism, and what are their doctrinal justifications? The research draws on translations and textual analysis of dharma lectures and written articles by influential monastic individuals, organizing their narratives into three categories: traditionalist, apologist, and reformist. Understanding these narratives can not only demonstrate how Buddhist leaders engage with critical issues facing their communities but also provide valuable insight into the dynamic of Buddhist religious tradition and modernity in Taiwan.

**Keywords:** Buddhist animal release ritual (fangsheng 放生), Contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism, Humanistic Buddhism (renjian fojiao 人间佛教), Master Xingyun, Buddhist environmentalism

[140] Yue Zhu (Institut national des Langues et civilisations orientales). *The Jiaqing Emperor's Gift? A Biography of an Alleged Imperial Ivory Maison.*

**Abstract.** Drawing on Sino-French archival materials, this paper re-examines the provenance and historical identity of the ivory architectural model labeled "Fenyang Fu" in the collection of the Musée Guimet. Framed within the perspective of global trade history, the study reveals that this object was not an imperial gift, as long assumed, but a representative example of export art produced at the Canton (Guangzhou) port in the early nineteenth century.

By situating the model within the re-emerging maritime networks that linked China and France after 1800, and by correlating customs data and shipping records, the paper reconstructs its transoceanic trajectory from Guangzhou to France, possibly via a specific merchant vessel. This reconstruction illuminates the broader commercial and cultural mechanisms that enabled the circulation of "Chinese" luxury artifacts across imperial boundaries. Further analysis shows that the model was later incorporated into the Napoleonic regime's collections, where its display acquired new layers of symbolic meaning. Positioned within the emperor's private study, it served as both an exotic ornament and an allegory of imperial ambition. Through this case, the paper explores how material objects mediated the intersection of global commerce, political power, and cross-cultural imagination, offering new insight into the entangled relationship between Eurasian material exchange and imperial representation in the early nineteenth century.
**Keywords:** global history, Ivory model, Napoléon, Jiaqing

[141] Jens Reinke (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), Wei-Yi Cheng (Fo Guang University), Tzu-Lung Melody Chiu (Nanhua University) and Jingke Xiao (University of Oxford). *Guanyin in the Public Sphere: Entanglements of Buddhism and Secularity in Contemporary Sinophone Societies.*
**Abstract.** Buddhist engagement with the public sphere is not a recent phenomenon; Buddhists have long acted beyond monastic and ritual contexts. Yet, the modalities of this engagement continue to evolve as Buddhism becomes entangled with modern institutions and contemporary secular society. This panel explores how Buddhist actors in the Sinophone world navigate, negotiate, and reshape domains such as healthcare, welfare, tourism, and the economy.
Drawing on ethnographic research from Taiwan and China, the four papers examine Buddhist participation in diverse fields of public life. Two contributions from Taiwan analyze forms of care: the Cheng Te Foundation's (正德基金會) integration of Buddhist compassion into state-regulated medical systems through Buddhist values and Traditional Chinese Medicine, and the Dabei Academy's (大悲學苑) development of Buddhist palliative care within secular healthcare frameworks. A third paper investigates the social enterprise Cemedas (茲摩達司) in eastern Taiwan, where monastic-led collaboration with Indigenous communities redefines Buddhist engagement with market and community life. The fourth paper, based on fieldwork in Nanyue 南岳, explores how state-sponsored religious tourism in China reshapes Buddhist practice, shifting authority from monastics to market actors.
Focusing on small- and medium-sized actors rather than globally active Humanistic Buddhist organizations, the panel illuminates how Buddhists balance religious values, social ethics, and secular rationalities. Together, the papers reveal the entangled realities of Buddhism and secularity in Sinophone societies, contributing to broader debates on religion, plural modernities, and public life in contemporary East Asia.
**Keywords:** Buddhism in sinophone societies, Buddhist engagements in the public sphere, Buddhism and secularity

**Tzu-Lung Melody Chiu (Nanhua University)** – *Healing Across Religion, Tradition, and the Secular: Buddhist Compassion and Medical Care in Taiwan's Cheng Te Foundation*
Since the 1980s, Buddhist charities in Taiwan have played an active role in state welfare and healthcare. The Cheng Te Foundation (正德基金會), founded in 1986 by Master Chang Lu (常律), provides free Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) services to a diverse range of recipients—including the poor, Buddhist monks, Christian pastors, and priests. Drawing on the founder's own experiences of poverty and encounters with Christian aid, Cheng Te enacts a form of compassionate care that moves across religious and institutional boundaries, engaging both secular and spiritual concerns. This presentation examines how Cheng Te's doctors and volunteers operate within Taiwan's state-regulated medical system while keeping Buddhist values central to their care. It explores how concepts such as karmic illness (業障病) are interpreted in everyday medical practice, and how Buddhist compassion is adapted to professional and administrative frameworks. Drawing on fieldwork, organizational documents, and Cheng Te TV programs, the research shows that Buddhist ethics are not simply accommodated within secular contexts but actively reshape what healthcare can mean. Within the broader framework of Buddhist–secular entanglements in Sinophone societies, this presentation argues that Cheng Te's work is positioned at the intersection of three distinct yet interacting domains: religion (Buddhism), traditional medicine (TCM) as a universalized knowledge system, and secular state healthcare and welfare policies. This triadic framing highlights how Cheng Te mediates between these spheres, illuminating the interplay of values, norms, and institutional practices in healthcare.

**Jens Reinke (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)** – *From Deathbed Chanting to Hospice Care: The promotion of Buddhist palliative care at the Dabei Academy in Taiwan*

In Chinese Buddhist history, death-related practices have often carried negative connotations. Early 20th-century reformers like Shi Taixu sought to modernize the tradition by moving beyond funerary rituals. Nevertheless, care for the dying has remained central and, in recent decades in Taiwan, has been transformed and institutionalized, exemplified by Buddhist palliative care. This presentation is part of a larger multi-sited ethnographic project on the contemporary Buddhist deathscape in Taiwan. It examines Taiwan's Dabei Academy (大悲學苑), a bhikṣuṇī-led temple in Taipei notable for its focus on palliative care. The presentation pays particular attention to lay Buddhist volunteer training and promotion of public awareness through a theater play, a book, and a documentary. The presentation explores how Buddhist actors negotiate their practices within a multireligious and secular society. It asks: How is palliative care, with Christian origins, adapted in Taiwan, where Buddhism plays a key role in death-related care alongside other traditions? Which sources—Pure Land teachings, Mahāyāna ethics, intellectual lineages, and caregiving traditions—inform these practices, and how are they reinterpreted in palliative contexts? It further examines how Buddhist elements are transformed to meet the requirements of secular care, linking these practices to broader Taiwanese understandings of dying, grief, and family care. Beyond the Taiwanese case, the project offers insights into the global entanglements of religion and secularity, showing how Buddhist engagements with social welfare are shaped not only by transnational circulations of ideas and practices but also by locally understandings of care extending beyond Eurocentric models.

**Wei-Yi Cheng (Fo Guang University)** – *Religious Agency in a Secular Context: Buddhist Engagement with Indigenous Communities in Taiwan*

This study examines how religious agency operates within secular contexts through the case of Cemedas Co., Ltd. (茲摩達司社會企業有限公司), a social enterprise founded by Buddhist monk Yanguan (演觀). Central to this inquiry is how Cemedas negotiates the tension between Buddhist monasticism and secularity. Based in Taitung, eastern Taiwan, the company has built long-term partnerships with indigenous communities that primarily adhere to non-Buddhist traditions. Employing a "purchase instead of donation" model, Cemedas markets agricultural products from these communities to support financial independence and economic sustainability. At the same time, Cemedas unsettles conventional expectations of Buddhist monastics as socially detached and disengaged from commercial activities. Cemedas illustrates how Buddhist actors navigate the boundary between renunciation and worldly involvement. This research contributes to broader discussions on the interplay between religion and secularity by showing how Buddhist social practice can be situated within a market-driven framework. In doing so, it highlights the ways religious actors reinterpret their roles, extending moral authority and ethical commitments into secular domains while reconfiguring their relevance within pluralistic societies.

**Jingke Xiao (Oxford University)** – *Selling the Sacred: Continuity and Secularisation of Buddhism in Contemporary Nanyue*

In recent years, China's political regulations for institutionalised Buddhism have tightened, leading to increasing restrictions on lay participation in temple activities. Paradoxically, this has coincided with continued state support for religious tourism since the economic reforms of 1978. Nanyue 南岳 (the Southern Sacred Peak) — one of China's Five Sacred Mountains and a historically important site of Buddhist, Daoist, and imperial worship — exemplifies this contradiction, with pilgrimages now focusing on 'burning incense 烧香' more than traditional orthodox rituals. Existing research on Buddhism in Nanyue primarily examines its history, literature, and adaptation within Chinese contexts, based on historical sources and prior scholarship. However, little research has examined, from an ethnographic perspective, how Buddhism in contemporary Nanyue negotiates and adapts to broader economic and political agendas, particularly in the context of state-promoted religious tourism. Framing Nanyue Buddhism within the context of tourism, this study offers ethnographic insights to address the existing research gap. Based on fieldwork since November 2024, employing participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and official government data, the study argues that, despite tightened regulations on official religious institutions, Buddhism has not declined. Instead, state-led tourism has fostered a market-driven form of Buddhist dissemination, shifting religious authority from monastics to market actors. This challenges the assumption that state regulation inevitably weakens Buddhist activity, showing how religious continuity can persist and adapt through market mechanisms. On a broader scale, it provides one example of the complex interplay between secular, political, and market dynamics and religion in sinocultural contexts.

[142] Yilin Gao (Univeristy of Essex). *Reimagining Neo-Confucian Gender Ethics in Empresses in the Palace (2011) : Feminine Agency and Moral Negotiation in Post-Socialist Chinese Media.*

**Abstract.** This paper argues that Empresses in the Palace (《甄嬛传》, 2011) reimagines Neo-Confucian gender ethics within post-socialist Chinese media, showing how Confucian virtues continue to shape femininity, morality, and hierarchy. More than a dramatization of Qing court life, it contends that the series serves as a moral discourse negotiating between tradition and modernity. By tracing Zhen Huan's transformation from obedient concubine to strategic moral subject, the drama reveals the dual function of Neo-Confucianism, as both an ideology of patriarchal subordination and a framework for female moral negotiation. It demonstrates how filial piety, propriety, and chastity are reinterpreted to express enduring tensions between virtue, gender, and power in contemporary China. Drawing on intersectional feminist theory and Neo-Confucian philosophy, this study employs narrative and visual-cultural analysis to examine how gender, class, and power shape women's agency within hierarchical systems. Through close readings of costume, colour symbolism, and cinematography, the paper shows that elite women transform moral virtue into symbolic capital, while lower-class women navigate subordination through loyalty and emotional intelligence. These portrayals exemplify "agency under constraint", where women mobilize Confucian virtues as tools of survival and limited autonomy within patriarchy.

Therefore, this paper contributes to debates in Gender Studies, Philosophy of Thought, and Modern Chinese media by demonstrating how Neo-Confucian ethics function both as moral constraint and as a language of resilience. It positions Empresses in the Palace as a key text mediating between Confucian revivalism and feminist consciousness in post-socialist China.

**Keywords:** Neo-Confucianism, Gender ideology, Intersectional feminism, Chinese period drama, Moral agency, Post-socialist China

[147] Ho Man Felix Loi (PhD Student, Institute of Theatre Studies, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU Munich), Germany). *The Fantastic Black Curtain: Ludic Modernity on the Early Republican Shanghai Stage (1910s–1920s).*

**Abstract.** This paper reconsiders early Republican Shanghai's modern experience (1910s–1920s) by reading heimu xiaoshuo ("black curtain fiction") as a coeval, transmedial formation across print and stage. Long dismissed as sensationalist exposé lapsing into voyeurism, the "black curtain" metaphor—concealment and revelation—has been moralized as obscuring China's Enlightenment project. While recent work nuances this picture, it remains largely socio-psychological, echoing Benjamin on detective fiction.

I argue instead that theatrical appropriations in wenming xi (civilized drama) and gailiang xi (reformed opera) mobilize the genre's indeterminacy and play as a dramaturgical method, constituting a "ludic modernity." A central case is Ximi Zhuan (Biography of an Opera Fanatic), treated mainly within fandom studies. Originating as satire indicting a corrupt order, stage versions reframe it as metadrama via narrativized chuanxi (pastiche play), stitching canonical opera scenes into a single arc while the "fanatic" fails to exit performance—thereby blurring role and reality. Parallel strategies surface in adaptations such as Heimu zhong zhi Heimu (Black Curtain within the Black Curtain), where recursion thematizes mediation and blurs exposure with concealment.

Paradoxically, therefore, critique reveals promise: akin to Todorov's "fantastic," these stagings sustain hesitation between frames, opening space for imaginative testing through masking and unmasking. I read this ludic modernity alongside textual games and contemporaneous debates on play, drawing on archival playbills, reviews, promptbooks, newspapers, and scripts. The result is heimu as practice, not pathology: historically specific staging techniques that supplement imported freedoms with a "freedom of play" (Youxi Shijie, 1906) and reframe Chinese modernity beyond exposure, moral pedagogy, teleology, and censorship.

**Keywords:** Ludic modernity, Black curtain fiction, Early Republican Shanghai, Early modern Chinese theatre, Ximi Zhuan

[152] Yee Ting Wong (The Chinese University of Hong Kong). *Mapping Ethnic Chinese in Hong Kong: Spatial-Temporal Patterns of Religious Organisations.*

**Abstract.** Tracking the growth and distribution of ethnic Chinese populations in contemporary Hong Kong remains methodologically challenging. Current studies primarily rely on sources including government census results, regional surveys, and case studies. Surely, official data provide a macro view of demographic changes over time. However, their definitions of ethnic groups were often problematic, and the detailed regional data were also unavailable, which prevent a more accurate analysis. Regional surveys and case studies offer valuable insights into the distribution of informal settlements. However, they often fail to capture broader spatial and historical trends.

For many Chinese, religion is a significant aspect of life. This paper tests the methodology that uses the establishment and distribution of Chinese ethnic religious organisations as key indicators to reconstruct the patterns of ethnic settlements and community development. When an ethnic group establishes a foothold in a new area, the founding of a religious organisation often follows, marking the establishment of an ethnic community. To illustrate, I focus on the Chaozhou group in 20th-century Hong Kong. By creating a geospatial database of Chaozhou temples, mapping their founding years and locations against the regional development of Hong Kong, I can trace a plausible timeline and distributions of Chaozhou settlements. I argue that by comparing the distributions of different religious organisations across different ethnic groups, such as temples, halls, and churches, we can compare their settlement patterns and better understand the dynamic settlement histories of ethnic Chinese within a region or a country.

**Keywords:** Ethnic Chinese, migration, Hong Kong, temples, Chaozhou

[156] Georgios Moraitis (University of Crete), Electra Kaltsoni (Panteion University), Dimitrios Stroikos (LSE IDEAS) and Konstantinos Tsimonis (Panteion University). *Sino-Greek Encounters Across Maritime, Migrant, and Cultural Frontiers.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines the evolving entanglements between Greece and China across a century of maritime, migratory, and cultural exchange. Bringing together historical, ethnographic, and discourse-analytic perspectives, it interrogates how the two societies have encountered one another through shifting global regimes of capital, empire, and cultural imagination.

The first paper traces the ventures of Emmanuel Yannoulatos and his company in early twentieth-century China, illuminating how Greek shipping capital operated amid imperial rivalries and ideological upheavals. It situates Greek maritime enterprise within a broader history of global mobility and adaptive entrepreneurship that prefigures contemporary forms of transnational engagement.

The second paper turns to the twenty-first century to analyse the reconfiguration of the Chinese diaspora in Greece following COSCO's acquisition of the port of Piraeus and the Golden Visa Program. Through new empirical data, it interrogates internal heterogeneity within the community and questions the continuing viability of "cohesion" as a conceptual frame for understanding diasporic life under conditions of neoliberal globalization.

The third paper explores China's deployment of geocultural diplomacy and civilizational imaginaries as instruments of soft power in its relationship with Greece, conceptualising this as an "infrastructural-geocultural assemblage" that merges investment, narrative, and geopolitics.

Together, the papers chart a century-long arc of maritime and cultural entanglement between Greece and China. They collectively reveal how commerce, migration, and narrative intertwine to produce shifting configurations of power, identity, and belonging, offering new insights into the global dimensions of both Greek mobility and Chinese influence.

This panel is supported by the Hellenic Association of Chinese Studies, marking its inaugural participation in the EACS conference.

**Keywords:** Sino-Greek relations, Maritime history, Global capitalism, Migration and diaspora, Geocultural diplomacy, Infrastructural geopolitics, Transnational encounters, Strategic narratives

**Yorgos Moraitis (University of Crete)** – *Honneybros: Yannoulatos brothers, the Greek diaspora, and Shipping in Wartime China*

Greek shipowners have long been recognised for their ability to operate across politically volatile and commercially uncertain environments. This article examines how such adaptability played out in the case of Emmanuel Yannoulatos and his company, Yannoulatos Bros, one of the earliest Greek shipping ventures to establish a sustained presence in China during the first half of the twentieth century. By tracing the company's activities during a period marked by imperial competition, wartime disruption, and ideological realignments, the study considers how Greek maritime actors engaged with—and adapted to—the rapidly shifting political landscape of East Asia. In doing so, it opens new avenues for understanding the global dimensions of Greek shipping beyond the familiar Atlantic and Mediterranean contexts.

**Electra Kaltsoni (Panteion University)** – *Transformations and dynamics of the Chinese community in Greece: the past decade*

Since the privatization of the port of Piraeus through its acquisition by the Chinese stateowned enterprise COSCO and the introduction of the Golden Visa Program in Greece in the mid2010s, there has been a significant increase in the number of Chinese citizens residing in the country. Although existing academic literature on the Chinese

community in Greece remains limited, previous studies (Rosen 2015; Polyzou 2014) provide valuable insights. A comparison between these earlier findings and the new data collected in this study raises critical questions regarding the evolving nature of this migrant group. The aforementioned recent developments, coupled with China's broader economic transformation, has significantly altered the composition and characteristics of the Chinese diaspora in Europe, particularly in Greece. These changes have introduced notable distinctions within the community in terms of socioeconomic status, professional backgrounds, geographic origins, aspirations, and political orientations. Furthermore, an increasing number of Chinese-founded organizations and businesses have gained visibility within Greek society, signaling a growing presence and influence. This presentation will seek to critically examine whether the Chinese community in Greece can still be regarded as a cohesive entity represented by its formal organizations or if internal divergences necessitate a reconsideration of this perspective. More specifically, it will explore how these internal differences manifest in the lived experiences and social dynamics of the community, ultimately questioning the extent to which unity or fragmentation defines the contemporary Chinese diaspora in Greece.

**Dimitrios Stroikos (LSE IDEAS) and Konstantinos Tsimonis (Panteion University)** – *Geocultural Power in China's Relations with Greece: Strategic Narratives, Civilizational Discourse, and the Piraeus Port as Assemblage*

This article examines how China has mobilized cultural diplomacy and civilizational narratives as part of a long-term strategy to cultivate and sustain its relationship with Greece. Since the mid-2000s, and particularly following its initial involvement in the port of Piraeus in 2008, a geocultural imaginary, grounded in selectively invoked notions of shared ancient civilizational heritage, has served as a narrative backbone of Sino-Greek engagement. This narrative was embraced and co-opted by Greek actors imbued with a sense of restoring dignity especially at a time when Greece was stigmatized during the Euro Zone crisis. However, it is argued that this discourse has assumed greater visibility since 2020 amid a cooling of relations and diminished expectations. Drawing on the concepts of strategic narrative, geocultural power, and the infrastructural turn in global politics, the article conceptualizes Chinese engagement in Piraeus as an "infrastructural-geocultural assemblage" entangled with the broader context of Sino-Greek relations that fuses investment and geopolitics with symbolic and political value. Within this assemblage, the geocultural imaginary functions as a form of narrative stabilizing: a strategy for preserving diplomatic momentum, legitimizing power asymmetries, smoothing political friction, and projecting continuity in the face of shifting geopolitical conditions. This approach acts as a form of "narrative hedging", maintaining symbolic alignment while anticipating more favorable circumstances. In doing so, this article contributes to debates on infrastructural geopolitics, strategic narratives, and geocultural power, and highlights that China's pursuit of geocultural influence in Greece has produced mixed results to date.

[158] Yating Zhang (Freie Universität Berlin), Tianyu Zhou (Freie Universität Berlin) and Minfan Yu (Durham University). *Reconsidering Liberalism and Neoliberalism in China: Intellectual Debates, Transnational Encounters and Digital Discourse (1950s-2020s).*

**Abstract.** This panel examines the evolution of liberal thought in China, encompassing classical liberalism, new liberalism, and neoliberalism, as a shifting spectrum of ideas about freedom, democracy, state, and market across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

By situating liberal intellectual lineage in the global circulation of ideas and the evolving political economy of reform, this panel reconsiders the long and complex trajectories of currents of liberal thought in China, aiming to explore how different liberal ideas were localized, politicized, and reinterpreted across different historical junctures and embedded in China's intellectual and institutional transformations. It explores how Chinese intellectuals, from the Republic of China to contemporary China, engaged with Western liberal and neoliberal ideas not as passive recipients but as active translators and reinterpreters within distinct ideological environments.

The three papers trace this evolution across distinct moments and topics: from the social-democratic aspirations and the blueprint of state building of intellectuals in the Republic of China to the reinterpretation of neoliberalism and transnational intellectual interaction in shaping reform debates under the political economic context of the cold war; the diffusion of neoliberal in the form of new institutional economics in China's market reform discourse and the shape of reform policy; and how the interaction between neoliberalism and the political label "right" in Chinese online discourse reconstruct the contemporary public language of liberalism.

The panel collectively offers a longue-durée reflection on the contested fate of liberal intellectual lineage in modern China and its entanglement with global intellectual history.

**Keywords:** China, Liberalism, Neoliberalism, Intellectual Debates, Transnational Knowledge Circulation, Digital Discourse

**Yating Zhang (Free University Berlin)** – *The German Pathway of Neoliberalism: Sino-German Exchanges on the Social Market Economy in the 1980s*

This paper explores how intellectual exchanges between Chinese and West German economists in the 1980s shaped China's understanding of the social market economy and facilitated a German pathway for neoliberal thought to enter China. The existing scholarship focuses on Chinese intellectual exchanges with Eastern Europe or the broader West in the reform era. While Isabella Weber has shown how West Germany's price reform became a metaphor in China's reform debate, these studies do not draw on original German archives or investigate the concrete interactions between economists and state actors.

Drawing on declassified German archives, published Chinese memoirs and reports, this paper reconstructs how Chinese economists interpreted the social market economy as a model balancing state intervention and market mechanism. It further demonstrates that West Germany's engagement was driven not only by economic interests but also by Cold War geopolitics. Bonn regarded China's reform as a potential showcase: a successful transformation toward a market-oriented system would exemplify the viability of a market economy and thereby affirm the ideological superiority of the West German model over the socialist world.

By situating the Sino-German intellectual exchange within the global history of neoliberalism, this paper reveals the German pathway of neoliberalism entering China's reform debates. It thus expands the geographical and conceptual boundaries of neoliberalism's global diffusion and contributes to rethinking the dynamics of knowledge exchange, economic diplomacy, and Cold War competition.

**Tianyu Zhou (Free University Berlin)** – *Non-Mainstream Neoliberalism in Practice: New Institutional Economics and Chinese Reform Thought, 1980–2010*

Markets arrived in reform-era China not as doctrine but as an institutional engineering project. This paper asks how neoliberalism actually entered China and argues that it did so chiefly in the form of New Institutional Economics (NIE). First, I show how NIE informed economic reform—especially state-owned enterprise restructuring—by reframing problems as property-rights definition, credible commitment, and incentive alignment, thereby legitimating gradual, state-steered marketization. Second, I explain how NIE furnished liberal intellectuals with a politically safer language for debating sensitive political reforms—recoding claims about constitutional constraints, checks on discretion, and rule-of-law into questions of commitment, transaction costs, and enforceable rules. Third, I demonstrate how NIE worked as a translation device for global reform experiences, converting contemporaneous cases—such as "shock therapy"—into analyzable lessons for selective borrowing and cautionary design.

Empirically, the study centers on three reformist communities of NIE adherents: (1) Steven N. Cheung and the Chinese–American circuit; (2) the Wu Jinglian–associated policy economists who built international NIE networks and brokered ideas into ministries and journals; and (3) Unirule (Tianze 天则) scholars who extended NIE to questions of political order. Methods combine close reading of primary texts, program archives, interviews, and network/bibliometric mapping of concept diffusion.

The contribution is threefold: it theorizes dual embedding (transnational brokers × domestic policy arenas), shows how and why institutionalist reasoning structured reform choices and persisted, and clarifies the family resemblance between neoclassical economics and NIE within the broader neoliberal spectrum.

**Minfan Yu (University of Durham)** – *Neoliberalism and the "Right" in Chinese Online Discourse (2010–2025): Interaction, Framing, and Public Language*

Neoliberalism is widely associated with the political label "right" in both Western and Chinese contexts. Since China's WTO accession in 2001, economic reforms have moved toward principles commonly linked to neoliberalism, including marketisation, private-capital expansion and selective deregulation. Meanwhile, the left–right schema in post-reform China has become semantically unstable, and "the right" is only weakly asserted as a public identity. This paper examines how neoliberalism and the right interact in Chinese online discourse and what that interaction reveals about the contemporary public language of liberalism. This research will construct a corpus of Sina Weibo posts (2010–2025) and restrict analysis to co-mention posts containing "neoliberalism" together with at least one right-related label. Using content analysis, this research operationalises interaction as measurable relations: the lexical co-occurrence strength and corresponding socio-economic background; differentiation between self-labelling and hetero-labelling of "the right"; stance toward neoliberalism and rhetorical.

This research tests two claims: first, that references to neoliberalism function predominantly as a hetero-label framed in moralised derogation; second, that co-mentions with "the right" intensify in issue domains with sharper and controversial social cleavages. Anchoring interaction in observable linguistic practice, the research helps explain why market-oriented reforms remain institutionally salient while "the right" appears discursively constrained in contemporary China.

[161] Mengjun Zhong (Goethe University Frankfurt). *Changes in attitudes toward identity between the new and older generations of peasant workers: a case study of peasant workers at a construction site in Chongqing.*

**Abstract.** Peasant workers born after 1980, often referred to as the “new generation,” have gradually become the dominant group within China’s peasant worker population. While extensive research has explored their social mobility and integration, less attention has been paid to how their self-perceived identities evolve amid the gradual abolition of the agricultural–non-agricultural household registration divides and their long-term immersion in urban life. This study examines whether these institutional and experiential transformations have reshaped the identity perceptions of the new generation compared with the older cohort. Drawing on qualitative interviews and policy analysis, the research finds that although the new generation still recognizes themselves as peasants, this identification carries a new functional meaning. Unlike their predecessors, whose attachment to the countryside was emotionally rooted in the land, the new generation tends to view their peasant identity as a strategic fallback a “safeguard mechanism for exit” that enables them to navigate and resist the pressures of high-cost urban life. Moreover, while both generations possess a basic understanding of citizenship, the new generation demonstrates a stronger capacity to translate this understanding into practice. By conceptualizing this adaptive identity as a form of agency under structural constraints, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of class transformation and citizenship formation in post-reform China.

**Keywords:** Peasant Workers, Migration, Identity, Citizenship, China

[164] Shuang Hibberd (National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University). *Museums and Colonial Legacies: Cultural Governance and Identity Formation in Taiwan and Hong Kong.*

**Abstract.** This presentation examines how colonial histories continue to influence cultural policy frameworks, museum practices, and the formation of cultural identity in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Through examining government policy documents, the establishment and development of major museums, and selected exhibition studies from the colonial and postcolonial periods, this analysis compares how Japanese and British colonial governments introduced distinct models of cultural governance in these two places, which have influenced postcolonial transformations after 1945 and 1997, respectively. These legacies continue to impact the cultural memory and identity construction of contemporary Hong Kong and Taiwan societies.

This research aims to highlight how museums, as arenas for negotiating multiple, competing narratives, mediate between nationhood, belonging, and cultural hybridity. By situating these trajectories within broader discussions on postcolonial museology and cultural governance in Asia, the presentation argues that Taiwan's localization and internationalization agendas, as well as Hong Kong's re-nationalized museum landscape, represent ongoing efforts at identity-making through the re-imagination of museums in the contemporary era. These attempts also reflect how museums in Hong Kong and Taiwan navigate new political and ideological influences on cultural identity and reconfigure cultural belonging in a world where political and cultural boundaries remain fluid and contested.

By examining museums as spaces where cultural policy, public memory, and identity politics intersect, and by comparing the trajectories of cultural policy transformation in both places, I aim to understand how cultural policy functions as a site of negotiation between political authority and social identity in societies with complex colonial and postcolonial transitions.

**Keywords:** Postcolonial museology, Cultural policy, Museum studies, Colonial legacy, Public memory, Cultural identity, Taiwan, Hong Kong

[168] Sha Li (Beijing Normal University). *Chinese Ideographic Writing as “Dialectical Images” ——An Implicit Chain of Thought from Lucy Driscoll, Lin Yu-tang to Walter Benjamin.*

**Abstract.** As early as the beginning of the 20th century, with the translation and introduction of Oriental artistic concepts by Okakura Tenshin and Herbert Allen Giles, "qi yun sheng dong" (vitality with rhythm), one of the Six Principles of Xie He, had already triggered a continuous stream of translation and commentary in the context of the modern transformation of Western art. Since 1935, when Chinese Calligraphy (the first monograph on calligraphy studies in the West) by American art historian Lucy Driscoll was published, Chinese calligraphy, together with "qi yun sheng dong", has gradually become an important source of inspiration for Western modern art and its theories during the spread of Eastern learning to the West.

Driscoll, Lin Yutang (who was influenced by her), and Jiang Yi (who came later) all accurately grasped the essential "vivacity" of Chinese calligraphy, defining the brushwork and character structure of Chinese calligraphy as "the art of movement in abstract visual forms". They analyzed the relationships between brush intentions using

contemporary Gestalt psychology, and even made an insightful comparison with French Surrealism, demonstrating the affinity between Chinese calligraphy, Western modern abstract art, and formalist ideas. Their discussions on the vivacity and rhythmic principles of Chinese calligraphy can be traced back to the early 20th century, when art historians such as Osvald Sirén, Seiichi Taki, Laurence Binyon, and Roger Fry translated and introduced Chinese artistic concepts, along with their underlying cultural and political intentions.
Furthermore, after Walter Benjamin interpreted Chinese calligraphy and the "xie yi" (freehand brushwork) tradition through his unique concept of "image-pensée" (thought-image), they were highly consistent with his notions of "Denkbild" (thought-image) and "Dialektisches Bild" (dialectical image), revealing the modern potential of Chinese calligraphy to reconstruct historical and epistemological perspectives. In October 1937, J. P. Dubosc, a French scholar and collector who was among the first in the 20th century to introduce the trend of Chinese Ming and Qing art to Europe and America, held an exhibition of Ming and Qing calligraphy and painting at the National Library of France. In his review of this exhibition, Benjamin used the theory of mimesis to interpret the animism in Chinese calligraphy and revealed the trait of Chinese calligraphic images being as fleeting and dynamic as flashes of light, making this review a unique archive of the cross-cultural modernity of Chinese calligraphy.
This paper presents a key finding: Benjamin's comments on Chinese calligraphy cited Lin Yutang's 1935 article "The Aesthetics of Chinese Calligraphy"—a work deeply influenced by Driscoll—rather than Lin's My Country and My People. Therefore, taking Benjamin's review of the Chinese calligraphy and painting exhibition as a case study, this paper briefly reveals the implicit ideological lineage from Lucy Driscoll and Lin Yutang to Walter Benjamin. It thereby illustrates how Chinese calligraphy inherently participated in the formation of Western modern non-representational art concepts. As an imagistic structure that is fleeting and eludes material capture, Chinese calligraphy, through Benjamin's reflections during the era of fascist rule, manifested as a dialectical image and demonstrated modern significance in creating new epistemological and historical outlooks. Benjamin's theory of "mimesis without cognition" is highly congruent with the Chinese artistic practice of "transcending form and discarding cognition", providing a Chinese experiential approach for modern technology to reorganize nature.
**Keywords:** Dialectical Images, Dubosc, Lin Yutang, Lucy Driscoll, Walter Benjamin

[177] Ge Tang (University College Dublin, Ireland). *'Read my case book, one page by one page': The Appeal of A Cantonese Gold Miner in Colonial Melbourne.*
**Abstract.** Jong A Sing (1835–1900) migrated from the Canton region to the goldfields of Victoria in 1853 at the age of 18. While working in the diggings around Maryborough, he was tried for assaulting his Chinese neighbours during a knife fight but was found not guilty on the grounds of mental problems. After moving between goals and hospitals, he was incarcerated at Melbourne's Yarra Bend Asylum. To clear his name and regain his freedom, Jong penned an appeal in the form of a handmade book, composed in a mixture of English, pidgin English, and Cantonese syntax. Historians, linguists, and scholars in medical humanities and literary studies have worked to make sense of Jong's story, but the petitionary form of his narratives remains unexplored, a gap this paper seeks to address. I situate Jong's text within the broader context of petitioning practices among Chinese communities in colonial Australia, who used petitions to challenge anti-Chinese sentiment, racial violence, and, most centrally, restrictive migration policies.
**Keywords:** 19C Chinese diaspora, petition, colonial archives, gold mining, incarceration, health humanities

[181] Haonan Guo (Tsinghua University). *Flowing Civilizations: Transcultural Lives of Chinese Porcelains in Renaissance Venice.*
**Abstract.** During the Renaissance, the Venetian Republic, as the commercial hub of the Mediterranean, played a leading role in the dissemination, reception, and reinvention of Eastern ceramics across Europe. Since Zheng He's maritime expeditions, Chinese porcelains—particularly blue-and-white ware—and their West Asian imitations had reached Venice through both diplomatic and commercial channels. The Oriental aesthetic and cultural identity embodied in these ceramics were absorbed into the Republic's visual imagery and material culture, shaping new patterns of artistic expression and social display. From the sixteenth century onward, the vogue for Eastern porcelain in Venice stimulated a flourishing local production of imitative wares, epitomized by maiolica, which in turn contributed to a cultural reconfiguration of Venetian visual arts. Drawing on archival inventories, diplomatic correspondence, and artistic representations, this article reconsiders the circulation of Chinese porcelain not merely as a mercantile phenomenon but as a catalyst for artistic translation, technological innovation, and cultural imagination in Renaissance Venice. The material exchange centered on ceramics between Venice, China, and the broader Eastern world thus served as a microcosm of early globalization, revealing how cross-cultural encounters

shaped aesthetic values and artistic practices.
**Keywords:** Chinese porcelain, Eastern ceramics, Renaissance Venice, cultural exchange, the Myth of Venice

[190] Chenye Xiao (University of Leicester). *Taking off the Uniform: Challenges, Adaptation, and Comrades Network in the Demobilisation Experience of the People's Liberation Army's 112th Construction Engineers Regiment.*

**Abstract.** Alongside the economic reform in China throughout the 1980s, the Central Military Committee under Deng decided to cut a million standing troops in 1985. In this fundamental military restructuring, non-combat troops, such as the infrastructure construction troops and construction engineers, were especially targeted as they were seen as redundant. To achieve this restructure, the PLA had to demobilise or transition (转业/Zhuanye) most of the soldiers and cadres in these non-combat troops. Compared to common soldiers who were sent back home as civilians, cadres in the 1980s could retain their cadre identity and their work was guaranteed to be comparable to their cadre level. Nevertheless, not all cadres enjoyed their new civilian life; on the contrary, most of them faced difficulties since their transition. This project is an oral history project focusing on the transition experience of veteran cadres in the PLA's 112th Construction Engineers Regiment in the 1980s. The 112th Regiment was one of these non-combat troops that went through personnel cuts during the 1980s. By engaging with veteran cadres' memories about transition and post-transition life, this project aims to reveal challenges faced by these veterans in the context of the state's gradual exit from centralisation and the growing central-local conflict. Taking a step further, the project will not only investigate how these challenges were created by different parties involved in the veteran cadres' transition but also how veteran cadres reconnected, used, and maintained a veteran network to resolve challenges during and after their transition.
**Keywords:** veteran arrangement, central-local relationship, veteran network, The Great Disarmament

[191] Mei Ai (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München), Liang Emlyn Yang (Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München) and Qiong Zhou (Minzu University of China). *Construction and Application of the Tea-Horse Road Area Flood Resilience Database (THR-FRD).*

**Abstract.** The Tea-Horse Road area spans the Hengduan Mountains and the eastern edge of the Tibetan Plateau, characterized by complex geography and frequent human activity. Over the past two millennia, the region has faced floods of varying scales but has shown significant resilience. To fill the gap in long-term flood resilience analysis, this study developed the Tea-Horse Road Flood Resilience Database (THR-FRD), compiling flood records from AD 0 to 2025. The database, with a temporal resolution of 50 years and spatial resolution based on county-level divisions, includes sources such as local chronicles, archival documents, ethnographic surveys, and observational data. It consists of three sub-databases: Exposure, Vulnerability, and Risk, quantifying flood resilience. Exposure tracks flood frequency and intensity; Vulnerability assesses social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities; Risk evaluates actual flood damage. Flood resilience is calculated through a weighted model and normalization method. The THR-FRD database will be open-source, scalable, and bilingual, providing valuable decision support for scholars in history, geography, and related fields.
**Keywords:** Climate Change, Flood Resilience, Long-Term Dataset

[192] Qiang Jia (Politecnico di Milano). *REDUCED TO NOTHING LANDSCAPE.*

**Abstract.** Focusing on Zhangye and the Hexi Corridor, this study examines the evolution of agricultural landscapes in northwestern China by exploring the interplay between historical processes, policy interventions, and contemporary rural life. Since its founding in the Han Dynasty, the region's framework, defined by the Qilian and Yanzhi Mountains, has consistently shaped pastoral farming. Over the past decade, rapid urbanization has exacerbated a rural exodus, particularly among the youth, leading to an aging agricultural population. Furthermore, the surge in greenhouse cultivation since 2019 exemplifies a rapid, policy-driven land use transformation that is altering traditional practices and local ecosystems. The once dominant farmland landscape is becoming increasingly industrialized, erasing agricultural heritage and introducing an aesthetic that contradicts local sensibilities. Through fieldwork—including ethnographic interviews and historical satellite imagery analysis—this study provides a deep understanding of these socio-ecological dynamics while addressing methodological challenges like scarce English-language literature and political sensitivities. By integrating historical, policy, and field perspectives, this study illustrates how historical relics and contemporary policies jointly shape rural landscapes, offering insights for sustainable development strategies that balance modernization with ecological and social needs.
**Keywords:** China, Hexi Corridor, agricultural landscape, heritage conservation

[194] Edward Chan (Postdoctoral Fellow). *China's Institutional Efforts in Ocean Governance: Norm Entrepreneurship in Distant-Water Fishery Management.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines China's expanding role in ocean governance. While maritime security experts raise concerns over China's growing influence at sea, international relations scholars see it as a potential challenge to the established liberal order. This paper explores how China increases its influence in regional and international maritime organisations, proposing that China employs norm entrepreneurship as a strategy to assert power without overtly challenging existing norms. Using case studies on China's involvement in fisheries management in the South Pacific, the paper investigates China's agenda-setting activities and norm-building efforts, examining their alignment with China's broader maritime strategy. This analysis provides a systematic understanding of China's objectives, motivations, and impacts on the rules-based maritime order, offering new perspectives on China's approach to global governance.

**Keywords:** Governance, Fishery management, Maritime order

[195] Anastasia Sinitsyna (University of Tartu), Bart Dessein (Ghent University), Huanyu Zhao (Ghent University), Beatrice Gallelli (Ca' Foscari University of Venice) and Richard Turcsányi (Palacký University Olomouc). *Roundtable Discussion: "ReConnect China – What Is the Future of EU–China Relations?".*

**Abstract.** The rapidly evolving global economic and political landscape—marked by rising uncertainty, intensifying geopolitical competition, and growing trade tensions resulting from newly imposed U.S. tariffs—has created a new environment for both the European Union and China. These global transformations raise questions for both sides: how to manage risks, how to identify reliable partners, and how to maintain strategic autonomy in an increasingly fragmented world.

The current roundtable discussion aims to shed light on the overarching question: what are the key shifts in EU–China relations since 2019, when the EU adopted a de-risking approach and began to regard China simultaneously as a partner, competitor, and systemic rival? The roundtable explores four interrelated domains of EU–China relations—science and technology, economy and trade, China's domestic governance, and foreign policy. Specifically, the discussants will address China's evolving global role, including its concept of ecological civilization, the Global Initiatives (Development, Security, Civilization, and Governance), and China's engagement in Africa and the Arctic.

The discussion is grounded in recent research and policy-oriented outcomes from the ReConnect China project, which brings together 15 partners and 66 researchers from 12 EU Member States. Funded by the European Commission's Horizon Europe programme (HORIZON-CL2-2021-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-07), the project aims to foster mutual understanding and chart pathways for a balanced, forward-looking relationship between Europe and China.

**Keywords:** EU-China economic relations, China's domestic policy, China's foreign policy

First roundtable participant will talk on China's four Global Initiatives—on Development, Security, Civilization, and Governance—as key frameworks through which Beijing seeks to reshape global norms and promote an alternative vision of international order as well how these initiatives function both as diplomatic narratives and policy instruments, reflecting China's efforts to position itself as a leader in global governance and to expand its influence across multiple regions and sectors.

The second roundtable participant will deliver a talk on the concept of ecological civilization as a central pillar of China's sustainability discourse that envisions harmony between economic development and nature as a foundation for long-term national progress and explain how this concept has evolved from a domestic policy framework into a key element of China's global environmental narrative.

The third roundtable participant will talk about the evolving dynamics of China–Africa relations, highlighting both the opportunities for development and the debates surrounding dependency, governance, and sustainability.

The fourth roundtable participant will talk about China's expanding economic interests in the Arctic as a potential new trade route that could complement and diversify existing maritime corridors such as the South China Sea and the Strait of Malacca.

[196] Massimiliano Portoghese (Ghent University). *IS THERE ANY CHINESE BUDDHIST APOLOGETIC AT ALL? SOME METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS.*

**Abstract.** In the sixth century CE, Buddhism's presence in China began to gain institutional and intellectual support through the compilation of comprehensive compendia that sought, on the one hand, to assert Buddhism's historical

identity on Chinese soil and, on the other, to respond to criticisms of the emerging monastic community. Among these works, Sengyou's Hongming ji (Collection on the Propagation and Clarification of Buddhism) has been widely regarded by scholars as the apologetic compendium par excellence. While acknowledging the heterogeneous nature of this source, several methodological issues arise regarding its commonly assumed classification. What constitutes an "apologetic" text, and can it be considered a distinct literary genre? Is this label truly helpful when applied to early medieval Buddhist sources—especially given that such a classification emerged within Western Sinological discourse? In light of these questions, this study critically examines the prevailing Western terminology used to describe the works included in the Hongming ji, while highlighting the absence of self-designated doxographical categories within Chinese historiography. Finally, by engaging with the ongoing debates in Christian literature studies on what an apologetic text does actually represents, this contribution suggests a multilayered interpretation of the term—far from a fixed doctrinal Christian usage—that enable us to employ it in a heuristic way that emphasizes the diversity of authors, literary styles, apologetic strategies and intents.
**Keywords:** Apology, Chinese Buddhism, Hongming Ji

[202] Percy Yixuanchen Yu (Johns Hopkins University). *Delineating Peripheries: Taiwan's Democratic Subjectivity and the Reconfiguration of Sovereignty in Modern East Asia.*
**Abstract.** This paper examines how post-1979 Taiwan, as a diplomatically marginalized yet politically active periphery, reconfigures central concepts in Politics and International Relations—most notably sovereignty, legitimacy, and the construction of international order in East Asia. Departing from recognition-centered theories of statehood, the study conceptualizes Taiwan as a site where diplomatic subjectivity—the capacity of a non-recognized entity to act with intention, effect, and strategic agency—is continuously articulated despite its exclusion from formal international structures. Building on my framework of the Democratic Trilemma of Overlapping Sovereignty, the project argues that Taiwan's ambiguous position between state and non-state categories has generated a distinctive form of democratic subjectivity that challenges hierarchical assumptions embedded in regional governance. Historically, Taiwan's trajectory is situated within overlapping structures: the legacies of Japanese empire, the Cold War's bifurcated security architecture, and the post–Cold War liberal order that selectively elevates political actors based on democratic credentials. Through analysis of government white papers, diplomatic communications, international participation under alternative designations, and civil society discourses from 1979 to the present, the paper shows how Taiwan navigates great-power asymmetries while simultaneously shaping global debates on sovereignty, democracy, and identity.
The study argues that Taiwan represents a productive periphery within the broader Sinophone world—one that actively reshapes the epistemic and political foundations of "Asia." By foregrounding peripherality as a site of theoretical innovation, the paper contributes to contemporary discussions on sovereignty's fragmentation, global democratic ordering, and the future of East Asian international relations. It proposes that understanding modern Asia requires beginning not from its established centers of power, but from its contested margins.
**Keywords:** Mainland China, Taiwan, diplomatic subjectivity, international order, overlapping sovereignties

[203] William Nienhauser (University of Wisconsin), Zheyu Su (Connecticut College), Hans van Ess (University of Munich) and Lucas Bender (Yale University). *Exploring Social and Political Contexts as Portrayed in Tang Literature.*
**Abstract.** These four papers explore the interfaces between anecdotes, and poetry in the role of social and political commentary by writers in several eras of the Tang dynasty. Zheyu Su limns Cui Riyong's political career and presents various texts that reveal shifts in Cui's allegiance while also suggesting the possibility of Cui's personal evaluation was a hindrance to his advancement late in his career. William Nienhauser offers a translation and commentary on Niu Sengru's tale "Wu Jiangjun" 烏將軍 (The Black General) and draws parallels to figures in Guo's life, to parallel tales, and toe Niu Sengru's own political ideas imbedded in the text. Lucas Bender's paper explores the political principles regarding territorial control as revealed in the genre of frontier poetry (biansai shi 邊塞詩) throughout the dynasty and how they were adapted to changing circumstances arguing that the genre offered the most widely practiced written venue for such thinking in medieval China. Hans van Ess examines Tang tales to uncover the reactions of young students who struggle with the examinations: some under pressure of preparing for the questions fall in love with strange female beings, other fail and then give vent to their frustration, still other try to overcome the favoritism that marred their changes, all offering new insights into the examination system.
**Keywords:** Cui Riyong, historical narratives, Tang examination system, Tang tales, Tang frontier verse (biansai shi 邊塞詩), Niu Sengru

**Zheyu Su (Connecticut College)** – *Making Changes to Adapt to the Situation: Cui Riyong's 崔日用 (673—722) Success and Failure in Narrative and Poetry*

As a famous minister and poet rising up during Empress Wu's 武后 (624—705) reign, Cui Riyong initially belonged to the Wu clan clique. He later shifted his allegiance, participated as major planner in two subsequent coup d'états, and enjoyed favor from multiple emperors. However, even with this extraordinary merit, he was only Chief Minister for a short time and never returned to this position. The reason for this remains unclear in the historical narratives, which leave room for imagination. By examining narratives and poems related to Cui such as those in the Xin Tangshu 新唐書, Jiu Tangshu 舊唐書, Guang Yiji 廣異記 and Tangshi Jishi 唐詩紀事, this paper argues that Cui Riyong's failure in his later career is intentionally portrayed in these narratives as connected to his self-evaluation. It is said that he was one who "made changes to adapt to situations" instead of one who "adheres to an original plan," which made him "feel like a needle was stabbing his back." Whether true or not, narratives related to Cui consistently showcase his astuteness in political affairs. This paper posits that this very astuteness, while leading to his success, may have been the primary obstacle to his later career advancement.

**William Nienhauser (University of Wisconsin)** – *Niu Sengru's Critiques of Provincial Officials and His Ideas on the Historical Figure of Guo Yuanzhen in the Tang Tale titled "Wu Jiangjun" (The Black General)*

The Tang tale variously titled "Guo Yuanzhen" 郭元振 or "Wu Jiangjun" 烏將軍 (The Black General) on one level follows the motif of a hero rescuing a maiden from a beast. However, it attempts to further make clear some details about Guo's life imbedded in the tale as well as pointing out how Niu's attitudes toward the provincial governors are also given expression. Guo, of course, was a major successful commander of Tang troops against the nomadic northern neighbors of the Tang. This paper will juxtapose "Guo Yuanzhen" to Niu's extensive writings on the problem of the provincial governors. Included in this reading of the tale are suggestions of a historical context for the strange ending of the tale in which Guo marries the woman he has just rescued from the Black General and possible identifications of this porcine villain. Such as reading implies not only the potential reading of Niu's other tales (collected as Xuanguai lu, Records of the Mysterious and Strange) but also for the understanding of many Tang tales, much as Bian Xiaoxuan and other scholars have suggested.

**Lucas Rambo Bender (Yale University)** – *The Question of Imperial Expansion in Tang Frontier Poetry*

Although the question of whether the Tang empire had natural geographical or ethnocultural boundaries was discussed explicitly at court in the early reigns of the dynasty, geopolitical realities soon focused policy-making debates on more concrete decisions regarding territorial control. The question, however, remained a core animating problematic of the genre of frontier poetry (biansai shi 邊塞詩) throughout the dynasty. This paper catalogues the forms this questioning took over time and the ways it transformed in response to the Tang's changing circumstances. This catalogue then grounds a reflection on the relationship of the poetic art to contemporary politics. Chinese poetry has often been discussed on a model of stimulus-response, whereby poets are presumed to be responding emotively to specific historical circumstances. I find, however, that frontier verse consistently probed and problematized longstanding, abstract, and even theoretical questions of political principle, thus providing the most widely practiced written venue for such thinking in medieval China.

**Hans van Ess (University of Munich)** – *Criticism of the Examination System in Tang Tales*

Tang Tales very often tell the stories of young students who come to the capital to take the examinations there and who then fall in love with women who sometimes in reality may be foxes or other strange beings. There are, however, also many stories about young men who leave the capital after having failed in the examinations and who then give vent to their frustration. Too difficult were the questions, some said, while learning for them had a stifling on the young men's creativity. Yet another type of tales allows insights into ways to manipulate the outcome of the examinations. Favoritism often seems to have played an important role, and candidates tried to make use of their connections to men and women of power to influence the decisions. This paper wants to give some examples of how Tang literati through writing Tang tales dealt with the system of the imperial examinations, the outcome of which had decisive importance for the lives of almost every candidate who set for them.

[204] Xiaoxuan Sophie Meng (Lund University). *Encountering Seaweed: Life In and Beyond Macroalgae Farming Through Lived Experience of Farmers in Shandong and Fujian, China.*

**Abstract.** In the past few years, macroalgae farming has surged in popularity on a global scale as a potential major contributor to carbon dioxide removal. As the world's biggest producer of seaweed, China has actively engaged in this global effort to develop macroalgae farming as a nature-based climate solution. Amid this global enthusiasm, however, is a lack of attention to the local living worlds. This study brings attention to this critical gap in nature-based climate mitigation studies that often privilege biophysical metrics or policy framework. I make this argument

through attention to macroalgae farming villages in two major farming regions in China. By broadening notions of social relations into more-than-human senses and unraveling the structural synchronicities between economy, environment, and histories, I show how villagers' experience and sense-making of farming, ways of life and environments are deeply intertwined with both more-than-human dynamics and social constructs. For generations, villagers have embodied responsive coexistence with nonhumans and built ecological knowledge relationally; nevertheless, these engagements are increasingly undermined by power-laden social constructs within and beyond China. By identifying risks of naturalizing hegemonic social constructs and disembedding the economy and the environmental functions from social and ecological relations, this research emphasizes that the meanings and consequences of seaweed farming as a climate mitigation strategy cannot be fully understood without attention to the everyday contexts in which it unfolds.
**Keywords:** anthropocene, environmental humanities, seaweed farming, multispecies becoming-with, subjectivation, political ecology

[206] Sisi Li (The University of HongKong). *Hearing Her Voice: Rewriting Female Narratives and Reconfiguring Roles in Contemporary Small-Theatre Xiqu.*
**Abstract.** This paper examines how twenty-first-century small-theatre xiqu (Chinese opera) has become a key site for reimagining female subjectivity and rewriting canonical stories within contemporary Chinese culture. Focusing on three case studies, the Cantonese opera Jinlian, the Peking opera Wang Youdao xiùqī (Wang Youdao Divorces His Wife), and the Yue opera Zaisheng · yuan (Rebirth · Destiny), I combine performance studies and gender theory to analyse how contemporary practitioners dismantle the patriarchal narrative tropes of the "whore", "chastity", and "sacrifice". Drawing on close readings of scripts, rehearsal materials, and performances, I show how these works recentre marginal heroines such as Pan Jinlian, Meng Yuehua, and Meng Lijun, shifting the story's focalisation from male morality to women's embodied experience, affect, and ethical agency. On stage, strategies such as the re-semanticisation of one-table-two-chairs stage space, the use of objects as affective partners (the red chair, cloak, rain pavilion), and devices like double-dan casting make visible internal conflicts between obedience and desire, duty and selfhood. I argue that small-theatre xiqu does not simply "modernise" traditional opera at the level of scenography or music; rather, it reopens the ethical questions embedded in classical plots and allows suppressed female voices to be heard in the present. By tracing how these productions negotiate continuity and rupture with earlier versions, the paper highlights small-theatre xiqu as a medium in which the afterlives of tradition are actively refigured through women's stories and bodies on stage, in dialogue with current feminist and queer scholarship.
**Keywords:** small-theatre xiqu, female subjectivity, feminist gender criticism, adaptation and afterlives of tradition

[211] Mikkel Bunkenborg (University of Copenhagen), Anders Sybrandt Hansen (Aarhus University), Daniel Bäckström (University of Oslo) and Koen Wellens (University of Oslo). *Chinese Ethics – in Practice?.*
**Abstract.** This panel explores how ideas of morality and ethical living are woven into everyday life and religious practice in contemporary China and Taiwan. Drawing on four ethnographic case studies, it asks how people today understand and enact what it means to live well and act rightly — not through abstract philosophy, but in community life, family relationships, and temple practice. Our contributors present fresh anthropological research from a range of settings: from farming villages and university campuses in mainland China, to the mountain communities of the Blang ethnic minority in Yunnan, to temples and religious networks across Taiwan. Together, these studies highlight the ways in which people negotiate, question, and reaffirm moral norms in changing social worlds. By tracing how ethics takes form in conversation, ritual, and local practice, the panel invites discussion on what "Chinese moralities" look like today — as lived, contested, and continually reimagined. The papers will appear in two forthcoming edited volumes: Popular Moralities: The Anthropology of Ethics in Chinese Society (University of Hawai'i Press) and Religion and Ecological Crisis: Responses from Asia (Leiden University Press).
**Keywords:** ethics, morality, everyday life, religion, social practice

**Mikkel Bunkenborg (University of Copenhagen)** – *The Ambiguous Badness of Hormone Pears*
Farmers in China routinely use plant hormones in the cultivation of pears. Applying a solution with synthetically produced gibberellic acid to the stem of each little fruitlet ensures that the pears ripen evenly and quickly, and the use of plant hormones was once promoted throughout China as a scientific form of agriculture. Even so, most farmers now regard it as an embarrassment best kept secret from the wider public and in some areas, local governments have banned the practice. Based on ethnographic fieldwork and media reports, this paper explores the disjointed moralities that conspired to give hormone pears a bad name. In the wake of a long series of food

scandals, urban consumers in China are wary about the quality of their food and while the use of plant hormones never quite set off a national moral panic, concern with hormone fruit tends to surface in the media from time to time and urban consumers descry the use of plant hormones as a dangerous and morally reprehensible practice. The distaste for hormone pears among consumers has immediate effect on the market, and so pear growing farmers and local governments are also reaching the conclusion that hormone pears are bad, albeit for different reasons. Exploring the ambiguous badness of hormone pears as an example of popular morality, the article challenges the idea that the state inevitably takes the lead in defining right and wrong .

**Daniel Bäckström (University of Oslo)** – *Everyday ethics in the Blang Mountains*

The Blang villages that dot the mountainous China-Myanmar border are moral communities. Mapmun (ethics) inflect all aspects of everyday life: from eating food, to village self-governance, and relations with powerful others. Buddhist ethics are at the heart of what it means to be Blang. Children are taught what constitutes mapmun from an early age, from not lying to not singing while eating. Being Blang means living in a Blang village, which means abiding by the village rules—based on mapmun. People are not expected to succeed in being moral, but they are expected to apologise and pay a fine for violating village rules. The only act that can get someone banished from the community is repeatedly failing to apologise for their misdeeds. Relations between villages are based on an ethics of autonomy. Each village decides its own rules, and no other village can tell them what to do. Powerful others, such as ghosts, gods, and the state have a big impact on life in the Blang Mountains. Blang communities relate to these powerful others that surround them, based on an ethics of mutual aid: "we are good to them, so they should be good to us." Because local ecologies are ruled by mountain gods, mutual aid ethics make possible everything from soil fertility and good harvests to the prevention of degradation and locust plagues. This paper investigates what translating Blang everyday ethics can teach us about life in contemporary China and of potential futures on a warming planet.

**Anders Sybrandt Hansen (Aarhus University)** – *Words are vapors: Interaction ritual, coordination, and choreography*

In the anthropology of Chinese society, one line of inquiry holds that ritualization of interaction is of fundamental importance as a means of social integration, and as a form of power. Building on these assumptions, this paper discusses two forms of social interaction observed during fieldwork in Beijing and the reflections of two interlocutors about these. One case is the coordination of a class of students in a migrant school when receiving a visitor. The other case involves university students' performance in the political ritual choreography of the 60th anniversary of the PRC. In either case, it is shown that the felicity of these performances was unrelated to whether or not the actors' outer performance was a truthful expression of some inner emotional state. As examples of what Haiyan Lee (2016) calls "interaction rituals of presentational selves" this is a mode of interaction that may achieve social and emotional effects through the affective outward presentations of actors (rather than through outer re-presentation of inner states). This is compared to the viewpoint of one critical informant, who felt rather nauseous by choreographed performances of national harmony.

The paper argues that we should conceptually distinguish two semiotic levels in ritualized interaction, with coordination as the experientially primary level, and choreography as the meta-level application of knowledge about this primary level, that is, the application of knowledge about how coordination works. When knowledge of ritual suggests that you can use it to mold people it becomes an object of ethical reflection. This is the case for those who wish to apply the social energy of ritual to certain ends and for their critics alike.

**Koen Wellens (University of Oslo)** – *Establishing environmental ethics: The new job description of the Divine Farmer, Shennong 神農*

The Divine Farmer is a key deity in Chinese cosmology. As one of the two most important mythical ancestors of the Chinese people, Shennong sometimes features in contemporary nationalist discourse in China as a proud symbol of Chinese identity and ethnic unity. In his role as the Divine Farmer, on the other hand, he is worshipped popularly throughout the Sinitic world, including in Taiwan, as a cultural hero accredited with a long list of inventions and discoveries. He taught the Chinese people agriculture; he taught them to use plants, either as food or for medical purposes; how to practice trade, weave cloth and even how to make and play musical instruments. He set the ethical standards exceptionally high, sacrificing himself doing good for the people. In Taiwan today we find nearly 200 temples primarily dedicated to Shennong. In this co-authored paper, we discuss how and why the Divine Farmer is now invoked and worshipped in Taiwan as an exemplary deity, morally inspiring people to cultivate ecological awareness and improve their everyday practices. This occurs both within certain Shennong temples, and in some rural schools and charitable projects that approach Shennong as a secular moral figure. In these contexts, Shennong is presented as a model who can help children and communities grasp the ethical importance of caring for the land

and soil, thereby linking what is perceived as traditional virtues with contemporary ecological consciousness.

[214] Pi-Fen Chung (Huafan University). *Tracing the Origins of Benming Beliefs and Astral Images in the Tangut.*

**Abstract.** This study commences with an analysis of the distinctive corpus of astral deities unearthed at the archaeological sites and stupas. It aims to investigate the potential sources of these images and, critically, to determine their relationship to the Benming belief of the imperial family. Furthermore, the paper seeks to trace the ultimate origin of the Benming belief—whether it was derived from the Tang, Song, or Khitan Liao traditions. Through this inquiry, we examine the function and significance of these astral images within the broader framework of star-god worship and Benming practices in the Tangut during the eleventh through thirteenth centuries.

By situating this visual corpus within the longue durée of eleventh–thirteenth-century cultural history, the study juxtaposes Tangut developments with contemporaneous political and religious systems. The Tangut strategically navigated the shifting geopolitical landscape defined by the Northern Song, Liao, Southern Song, Jin, and Tubo (Tibetan) regimes. This paper delineates the process by which the Tangut proactively adopted and synthesized Buddhist beliefs and artistic styles from the Song, Liao, and Tubo, thereby forging a distinctively Tangut ethno-cultural expression in both religious belief and visual arts.

Zodiacal Signs, motifs for which no close iconographic parallels have been identified in the Central Plains. These Tangut images, which synthesize astral concepts originating in China, India, and Babylonia with both Buddhist and Daoist celestial traditions, constitute a uniquely hybrid visual repertoire preserved only in Western Xia contexts.

The stellar images are taxonomized into three principal categories. This study concentrates on the group of images that fall outside the typical Buddhist canon: one subset features stellar deity names attested in Song, Yuan, and Ming Daoist literature but lacks corresponding extant visual representations; the other subset is iconographically linked to the Twenty-Eight Lunar Mansions and the Twelve Zodiac Signs, a type of imagery also absent from Central Chinese archaeological records. The Tangut astral images, which synthesize astral concepts originating in China, India, and Babylonia with both Buddhist and Daoist cosmological systems, constitute a uniquely hybrid visual repertoire preserved only in the Tangut.

This paper endeavors to meticulously disentangle the intricate iconographic content and establish a clear developmental trajectory, thereby identifying the origins of its distinctive visual art.

**Keywords:** Tangut, Benming belief, Astral images, Lunar Mansions, Zodiac Signs

[222] Anna Sokolova (Ghent University). *Politics of Initiation: Maṇḍala Ritual and Esoteric Integration under the Tang Dynasty.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines the establishment and evolution of maṇḍala-based Esoteric Buddhist ritual practice under Tang imperial and local patronage. It traces how the introduction of Esoteric teachings by networks of foreign monks in the fifth century led to the creation of the incantation altar as a focal point of Buddhist ritual, culminating in the emergence of the Esoteric maṇḍala as a dominant ritual institution by the eighth century. The study pursues four aims: 1) to explore how deity-specific rituals merged into an inclusive Esoteric pantheon; 2) to analyze the formation of the maṇḍala as a universal template for initiation; 3) to trace the dissemination of imperially sanctioned practices, such as altar-dhāraṇī incantations, image worship, and maṇḍala construction, across diverse social contexts, drawing on evidence from Dunhuang, Turfan, and Kucha; and 4) to investigate the interactions between Daoist and Buddhist ritual authorities at the Tang court, illustrated by the 648 ban on the Daoist Sanhuang wen 三皇文 (Writ of the Three Sovereigns) alongside the court's lavish patronage of Esoteric apotropaic rites. The paper argues that Tang adaptation of ritual techniques centered on spell recitation and the conceptualization of the maṇḍala as a sacred sanctuary transformed the very notion of religious initiation. This transformation integrated Buddhist ritual across local communities and extended its functions to therapeutic, exorcistic, and life-cycle ceremonies, thereby redefining the role of Esoteric practice within the broader Tang religious landscape.

**Keywords:** Buddhist ritual, Tang dynasty, state-monastic relation

[223] Raffaela Rettinger (University of Würzburg), Cheng He (University of Tuebingen) and Yuhan Wang (Paul-Valery University). *Social History of Chinese Ink: New Perspectives.*

**Abstract.** For many historians of premodern China, the notion of ink use is most immediately associated with the literati class (e.g. moke 墨客). Meanwhile, research on the materiality and cultural roles of ink has remained largely confined to the field of art history, revolving around calligraphy, paintings, and inkcake connoisseurship. But these conventional characterisations belie the diverse roles played by ink as an object across all social strata in premodern

times: for all its renown as one of the Treasures of the Study, ink has never been confined to its bounds. To the contrary, as an (almost) non-negotiable part of producing any handwritten or printed object, encounters with ink were part of the lived reality of most people, not to mention non-textual uses of ink in areas such as body modification, food, and ritual. Each of the four presentations in this panel challenges the prevailing image of ink by spotlighting an under-researched role of ink in society. We shall hear how it was used in Daoist self-cultivation and exorcism practices, and by medical practitioners to treat childbirth difficulties and remove foreign objects from the eyes. We will also explore the curious absence of inked skin from depictions of the famously tattooed heroes of the Water Margins, and how ink allowed commentators to visually manifest emotion using marginalia.
This panel has been convened in celebration of Journal of the European Association of Chinese Studies issue 7.2 (2026), which explores ink in Chinese history and culture from unexpected and refreshing angles.
(250 words)
Listed here are the titles of the individual papers in order of appearance:
1) Ink as Medicine in Premodern China
2) Tell, Don't Show? – The Representation of Tattoo Culture in the Shuihu zhuan in Text and Print
3) Be My Drugs and Arms: A Study of the Use of Ink in the Daoist Canon
4) Ink Traces in the Critical Writings of Ming–Qing Literary Commentators: Metaphor,
Material Culture, and Textual Reception
**Keywords:** ink, materiality, cultural history, medicine, printing culture

**Cheng He (University of Tübingen)** – *Ink as Medicine in Premodern China*
When historians think of ink use in premodern China, they tend to associate it with textual or artistic endeavours. Ink's widespread use in medicine remains little known and underexplored. This paper seeks to remedy this by exploring the relationship between ink and medicine from a longue durée perspective, examining the material properties and cultural meanings of ink from its making to its use. Ink was valued for its constituent ingredients such as soot, which was attributed with medicinal effects. Herbs and animal substances added to enhance its texture and aesthetic value likewise possessed medical functions. Existing scholarship holds differing views on the distinction between ink and "medicine ink" (yaomo 藥墨) a type of ink specifically prepared for medical use and compounded with diverse ingredients common in traditional Chinese medicine. Drawing on treatises on ink, herbals, and healthcare manuals from premodern China, this paper traces the medicinal applications of ink to clarify the connections between writing ink and medicine ink, and to reveal how medical functions shaped its cultural meanings and value. It investigates the desired material properties of ink, its use in different medicinal preparations, and how "medicine ink" differed from ink made for writing.
**Raffaela Rettinger (University of Würzburg)** – *Tell, Don't Show? – The Representation of Tattoo Culture in the Shuihu zhuan in Text and Print*
As one of the most influential vernacular narratives, the Shuihu zhuan 水滸傳 (Water Margins) serves as a rich source on historical and socio-political phenomena, including the practice of tattooing. In the Jianghu 江湖-realm, inked skin (both decorative and institutional) serves as a symbol of this subculture. Heroes such as Lu Zhishen 魯智深, and Shi Jin 史進 carry nicknames inspired by their tattoos. It is thus not surprising that the inked bodies of the Liangshan heroes feature heavily on Japanese woodblock prints and have influenced Japanese tattoo culture. One might therefore expect similarly detailed and beautiful prints in Chinese illustrations. However, while their tattoos are an essential part of the heroes' identity and play a major role in the plot and narrative, they are conspicuously absent from accompanying depictions. The contrast of the importance of tattoos in the story and their deliberate absence in book illustrations—be it by depicting the heroes fully covered with clothing, or naked yet tattoo-less—reveals a conscious omission of tattoo representations through the printing studios and lays bare a tension between the romanticization of the tattooed hero in a fictional context and the reality of the suppression of such lifestyles during the Ming and Qing. A comparison of visual materials thereby permits a rare and extremely valuable glimpse of premodern China's decorative tattooing subculture—so often obscured from view by official sources—while showing how narratives on body modifications were constructed and appropriated in imperial China.
**Yuhan Wang (Paul-Valery University)** – *Ink Traces in the Critical Writings of Ming–Qing Literary Commentators: Metaphor, Material Culture, and Textual Reception*
This study takes "ink traces" (moji 墨迹) as its central concept to re-examine Ming–Qing literary commentaries from the dual perspectives of material culture and interpretive aesthetics. Focusing on Zhiyanzhai's 脂硯齋 marginalia on the Story of the Stone (Shitouji 石頭記) and Zhang Zhupo's 張竹坡 annotations to Jinpingmei 金瓶梅, it explores how "ink" functions both as a material sign and a metaphorical medium in literary criticism.

Traditional research often concentrates on ideological interpretation or narrative commentary, overlooking the emotional and aesthetic meanings embedded in the physical presence of ink: the flowing, congealing, and diffusing traces left on the page. Ink traces are projections of the critic's inner world, embodying emotion, memory, and judgment in tangible form. They transform the act of commentary into a materialized spiritual expression. This study examines how Zhiyanzhai's "tears mingling with ink" and Zhang Zhupo's brush movements manifest the critic's affective agency. It further situates these practices within the cultural sphere of literati studios, reading habits, and aesthetic ethics, revealing ink as both a product of manual labor and a vehicle of intellectual refinement. Drawing on reception aesthetics and material text theory, this research proposes an "Ink Trace–Mind Trace" framework, suggesting that the physicality of ink mediates between text, body, and spirit. By viewing commentary as an embodied act of writing, the presentation will contribute to ongoing scholarly discussions in literary criticism, publishing culture, and the history of emotions.

[226] Nicoletta Cirota (Ca' Foscari University of Venice). *Evidence-based pedagogical proposals for Italian learners of L2 Chinese with literacy impairments and/or dyslexia.*

**Abstract.** The growing interest in teaching and learning L2 Chinese worldwide has contributed to the development of new theories and methodologies in both Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Chinese Second Language Acquisition (CSLA). However, even though CSLA is a rapidly growing field, a significant research gap remains regarding the development of inclusive pedagogical strategies for L2 Chinese learners with diverse needs, for instance, learners with L1 literacy impairments and/or developmental dyslexia.

To address this, we conducted a quantitative study analysing the cognitive-linguistic profiles of 80 Italian high school students, including typically developing learners (TDLs), poor readers and dyslexic learners. Data were collected through the administration of an experimental task battery that measured L1 literacy skills and L2 Chinese cognitive-linguistic skills, including phonological and orthographic awareness, morphological awareness, and working memory.

This presentation focuses on the main results from statistical analysis of the collected data and their practical implications for teaching and learning. Analysis revealed a crucial finding: L2 learning challenges arose independently of an L1 diagnosis, suggesting L1 dyslexia does not automatically predict difficulties in L2 Chinese acquisition. Moreover, poor readers differed significantly from TDLs primarily on L2 Chinese writing-based tasks. This suggests Italian learners with L1 literacy impairments struggle predominantly with character writing production, and less with character reading and recognition. Ultimately, this presentation aims to bridge empirical research with practical application, offering an evidence-based framework for targeted, inclusive pedagogical interventions that address the specific barriers identified in poor readers and simultaneously enhance L2 Chinese literacy acquisition for all learners.

**Keywords:** Chinese Second Language Acquisition, Dyslexia, Literacy Impairments, Inclusive Language Education

[227] Stefania Renda (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia) and Silvia Scolaro (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia). *"If I Don't Pass the Admission Exam, I'll Die": The Existential Pressure in the Educational Experience of Chinese Students in the Marco Polo and Turandot Programs.*

**Abstract.** The international mobility Programs Marco Polo (2006) and Turandot (2009) have enabled thousands of Chinese students to access Italian Universities and AFAM institutions over the last two decades (Rastelli, 2021; Uni-Italia Analysis, 2024). While numerous studies exist on the linguistic acquisition of Italian by this specific student cohort, a crucial social and anthropological investigation is still lacking. This research addresses this gap by focusing on the emotional dimension, a factor strongly influencing both well-being and linguistic learning, to explore two key areas. First, it investigates the motivations that drive these students to undertake a demanding study path abroad, despite the inherent linguistic, bureaucratic, logistical, and socio-relational challenges. Second, it offers a reflection on the future aspirations of these co-learners. Drawing on the concept of the classroom as a field suspended between the "interstices of the now and the not yet" (Ingold, 2019: 10), the research employed a qualitative methodology. Data was gathered through participatory observation in class, informal conversations, both in-person and via WeChat (Miller et al., 2016), diary entries, and questionnaires. This contribution shares the findings from the educational experience shared with a group of Chinese students who attended the preparatory Italian language courses for academic admission between November 2023 and July 2024. The collected data were analyzed using the MAXQDA qualitative research software. The findings will be presented at the conference.

**Keywords:** Chinese students, International mobility programs, Qualitative research

[232] Florence Mok (Nanyang Technological University), Adonis Li (University of Lincoln) and Ho Nam Dexter Tse (Trinity College Dublin). *Colonial Governance, Society and Infrastructure in 20th-Century Hong Kong: A Historical Perspective.*

**Abstract.** Utilising under-explored archival data in Hong Kong and London, this panel investigates how twentieth-century Hong Kong navigated shifting geopolitical currents through the management of resources, urban development and infrastructural expansion. It traces how changing governance strategies, transfer of technological knowledge and planning norms shaped the city's socio-economic landscape. By following the negotiations among state and non-state actors, the panel also reveals how Hong Kong's developmental trajectory unfolded within the wider context of regional economic transformations, colonisation, decolonisation and the Cold War.

Mok's paper examines how colonial officials mobilised technical knowledge and regulatory tools to prioritise industrial water supply and maintain economic momentum against social pressures during the 1963-64 Water Emergency. Wong's paper turns to the rise of private homeownership in the 1970s, highlighting how collaborations between the state and property developers reconfigured fiscal capacity, anchored a new class of resident-owners and redistributed economic influence in Hong Kong. Li's paper explores the construction of the Beacon Hill Tunnel, tracing how international labour, engineering expertise and local constraints converged in a railway project that became a site of negotiation among governmental goals, technological limits and transnational networks. Tse's paper traces how the surge of piracy in the early 20th century reshaped the governance of maritime risk in pre-war Hong Kong, revealing how insurance policies, compensations and definitions of piracy shifted and whether they helped the suppression of piracy.

**Keywords:** Hong Kong, Governance, Colonialism, Decolonisation, Geopolitics, Urban Development, Infrastructural Expansion, Cold War, Transnational History

**Florence Mok (Nanyang Technological University)** – *Strategic Intervention and Industrial Prioritization: Water Governance in Hong Kong during Water Shortages, 1963–64*

Using archival and published records from Hong Kong and London, this article examines water governance for industries in Hong Kong during the 1963–64 Water Emergency. Challenging the conventional narrative of Hong Kong's laissez-faire colonialism, this article demonstrates how the perceived need to maintain political stability and promote export growth compelled the colonial government to intervene in water distribution, thereby shielding selected water-intensive industries from mass water shortages. Under this water arrangement, "essential" manufacturing industries enjoyed greater access to piped water. Domestic users, "non-essential" and small-scale industries however were affected more severely. This Hong Kong case reveals that through state propaganda, effective communication and industrial flexibility, social unrest could be mitigated. This article therefore contributes to the understanding of state interventions, economic strategies and resource distribution in Hong Kong.

**Adonis Li (University of Lincoln)** – *Boring Hong Kong: Tunnels and International Involvement on Hong Kong's Kowloon-Canton Railway*

Construction on the Kowloon-Canton Railway's Hong Kong section began in 1905, and was not completed until 1910, over time and over budget. One main reason for this was the difficulties in building the Beacon Hill Tunnel, which some sources claim was the longest tunnel in China at that time. Geology, disease, and labour issues all made construction more difficult. The construction of the tunnel was an international effort, bringing in Chinese miners returning from South Africa, British chief engineers, Chinese and Indian medical staff, and an Italian contractor. This paper explores the international dimensions surrounding the construction of this British railhead into the planned Chinese railway network. Using archival records, press coverage, and engineering reports, the paper reconsiders 'railway imperialism' and the imperial and global factors at play on Chinese railways.

**Ho Nam Dexter Tse (Trinity College Dublin)** – *Cost of Piracy: Insurance, Risk Management, and Piracy Suppression in Hong Kong, 1900-1941*

This paper proposes that the surge of the new piracy in the 1910s and 1920s, as well as the inability of the Hong Kong, British, and Chinese governments to suppress it, led to a change in the relationship between insurance and shipping. From the definitions of piracy in insurance policies, coverage of piracy in both maritime and life insurances, and the compensations to the crew members killed in pirate incidents, this paper explores whether, in reality, the interests of shipping companies, cargo owners, crew members, as well as passengers, were protected when pirates commit their crimes. Ultimately, this research examines whether insurance contributed to or obstructed the suppression of piracy in this period.

[235] Guoqing Song (Anhui University). *From "Poverty as a Virtue" to "Getting Rich is Glorious": State-Driven Value Transformation and the Legitimation of Rural Reform in the Post-Mao Era.*

**Abstract.** Since China's Reform and Opening-up, rural reform has attracted extensive scholarly attention, primarily focusing on policy origins, diffusion, and institutional changes. However, the ideational drivers behind these transformations remain underexplored. This paper addresses this gap by investigating the state-driven transformation of rural values during the early reform era, specifically the shift from regarding "poverty as a virtue" to legitimizing "getting rich." The study is grounded in the intellectual history (history of ideas) framework, which emphasizes the origin, evolution, and social impact of dominant ideas over time. It situates these value changes within broader political and cultural contexts. Utilizing diverse sources, including policy documents, archival materials, and oral interviews, it constructs an interactive framework linking ideational change with policy evolution. It highlights how the Party and government were central not only to institutional design but also to reshaping dominant values to legitimize rural reforms. By revealing the dynamic interplay between value reconstruction and political legitimation, this research offers a novel perspective on the ideological foundations of China's rural transformation and contributes to a deeper understanding of the political and social drivers underpinning China's market-oriented reforms. The findings have implications for broader studies on state-society relations and the role of value transformation in policy legitimacy in transitional societies.

**Keywords:** Rural Reform；, Value Transformation；, Political Legitimation

[237] Shuhan Lin (University of Nottingham Ningbo China). *The Maoist Past (1949-1976) and the 'Postmemory Generation' Filmmakers in Chinese Cinema.*

**Abstract.** My research employs Marianne Hirsch's (2012) theory of 'postmemory'—the structure of generational transmission of traumatic memories—to identify a young(er) generation of Chinese filmmakers born in the late 1960s onwards who have diligently engaged in investigating the Maoist political campaigns since the 2000s. Compared with the 'Third', 'Fourth', and 'Fifth Generation' Chinese filmmakers who were born before the 1960s, the 'Postmemory Generation' lack first-hand experience of Maoist political movements. Moreover, their knowledge of trauma is restricted by a collective amnesia enforced by the state censorship and the self-censorship among the former generation. Nevertheless, either through fictional representations or documenting, their films have divergently explored historical memories to 'remember' the Maoist past from which they are relatively distant.

Through a textual analysis of the 'Postmemory Generation' films, I argue this generation's approach to the representation of history derives precisely from their unique consciousness of the generational discontinuity regarding the traumatic memories of the socialist China. While the early traumatic films by the Third/Fourth/Fifth Generation adhere to the past tense (i.e. re-enacting traumatic events) to expose historical pain, the Postmemory Generation filmmakers adhere to the present tense (i.e. focusing on the present life) to investigate the Maoist political campaigns, which enables the emergence of the 'hidden' relation between the trauma of the socialist China and the reality of postsocialist China. Their films not only try to reveal the 'forgotten' tragic memories but also to restore the younger generation's relationship and identification with the Maoist historical trauma.

**Keywords:** Postmemory, The Maoist past, Historical trauma, Remembering and forgetting, Postmemory Generation, Chinese cinema

[240] Xiaoyang Zhang (Ningxia Normal University) and Di Wang (Yuelu Academy, Hunan University). *Roaming and Ritual in the Chu Ci: Reimagining Spirit and Space in Early China.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines how the Chu Ci (Songs of Chu) and its intellectual milieu transformed ancient notions of wandering and ritual movement into powerful vehicles of cultural imagination and political meaning. Across the late Warring States and early Han periods, mobility—whether physical or spiritual—served as a central mode of inquiry into the relations between body and soul, ruler and realm, center and periphery.

"The Transformation of the Hun and Po Concepts in the Warring States Period" traces the evolution of the hun and po (魂魄) concepts from common medical knowledge and ritual practice into elite philosophical discourse, showing how soul-summoning rites inspired the Chu Ci poems "Summoning the Soul" and "The Great Summons." These works transformed healing rituals into an aesthetic of transcendence, unraveling the tension between freedom and mortality.

"On the Margins of Sacred Mountains and Rivers" shifts from metaphysical wandering to ritual touring, focusing on the Xiang deities and Jiuyi Mountain to illuminate how Chu ritual geographies were redefined under imperial unification. The changing meanings of ritual tours—oscillating between spiritual communion and sovereign conquest—reveal how the Chu Ci provided a liturgical framework for imperial adaptation and political assimilation.

"The Chu Ci and the Politicization of Space in the Western Han" situates this poetics of wandering within a Han political context. Drawing on the Huainanzi, the Mawangdui manuscripts, and Sima Xiangru's fu, he examines how the Chu Ci's cosmic journeys were reinterpreted as acts of imperial mobility and spatial mastery, reflecting a transitional moment before the Confucian ideal of the sedentary ruler took hold.
Together, these papers uncover the Chu Ci as a dynamic medium through which early Chinese thinkers reimagined movement—ritual, poetic, and political—as both spiritual transcendence and territorial transformation.
**Keywords:** Chu Ci, Early Chinese Religion, Empire, Ritual, Movement, Spirit, Space

**Xiaoyang Zhang (Ningxia Normal University)** – *From Medical Knowledge to Elite Culture: The Transformation of the Hun and Po Concepts in the Warring States Period*
The concept of hun and po (魂魄), which emerged in the late Spring and Autumn period, was closely tied to people's understanding of life, death, and illness. By the Warring States period, it had become a form of common knowledge expressed in rituals for warding off disease. This concept was later systematized and theorized as a core mechanism of disease formation in The Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon (黃帝內經), reflecting contemporary medical thought. Rooted in medical knowledge, the idea of hun and po spread widely and was gradually absorbed into the philosophical systems of the Masters. It served as an intellectual resource for the Zhuangzi's theory of form and spirit and, through philosophical transformation, acquired a transcendent quality. The soul-summoning ritual associated with hun and po also provided a structural model for the Chu Ci poems "Summoning the Soul" (招魂) and "The Great Summons" (大招). These works construct conceptual spaces linking heaven and humanity, contemplating the cosmos, and traversing time to recall the past, where vivid imagination and imagery unfold. The "wandering soul" motif in the Chu Ci, like that in the Zhuangzi, embodies transcendence beyond reality; its sense of freedom, tinged with sorrow, reflects shared understandings of death and illness, creating a distinctive aesthetic tension. The integration of hun and po into philosophy and literature was not one-way but a dynamic interaction between elite culture and common knowledge, enriching its meanings throughout the Warring States period.
**Di Wang (Yuelu Academy, Hunan University)** – *On the Margins of Sacred Mountains and Rivers: The Xiang Deities and the Jiuyi Mountain in the Chu Ci*
The Chu Ci occupies a dual position in early Chinese literature: both a canonical cornerstone and a repository of marginal, southern voices. Authored largely by exiles from Chu, it is renowned for its rebellious energy and challenge to the cultural orthodoxies of the Central Plains. Yet the later celebration and canonization of Qu Yuan's genius transformed this poetry of dissent into a monumental pillar of the tradition. Chu culture inherited significant legacies from the Shang, as seen in records of tribal intermarriage in the excavated text Chuju (楚居) and in the persistence of Shang ritual figures such as Donghuang Taiyi (東皇太一). At the same time, Chu religion was deeply rooted in its own geography. The Xiang River—a key site in its indigenous tradition—was famously omitted from the Tribute of Yu, marking it in classical discourse as a space beyond Central Plains control. This liminality is vividly reflected in Qin Shihuang's actions. During his first southern tour, he destroyed the temple of the Xiang goddesses (purportedly Yao's daughters and Shun's wives); on his final tour, however, he performed a wangsi (望祀) ceremony nearby, offering sacrifices from afar to Shun and Mount Jiuyi. This shift constituted a symbolic inversion of the Chu Ci's spiritual hierarchy, subordinating local deities to a Central Plains paragon. This paper reconstructs the original liturgical order surrounding the Xiang deities and Jiuyi Mountain, tracing how later interpreters redefined this local pantheon to absorb Chu's rebellious landscape into the moral and cosmological order of the empire.

[242] Ting-Ying Lin (National Chengchi University). *The Aesthetic Genealogy of Sinophone Cinema: The Cinematic Influence of Edward Yang's Urban Realism in the Films of Anthony Chen.*
**Abstract.** This article examines how Edward Yang's urban realism in Taiwan New Cinema has influenced and been transformed within Sinophone cinema, focusing on Singaporean director Anthony Chen's "Ilo Ilo" (2013) and "Wet Season" (2019). Edward Yang's films employ restrained cinematography, long takes, and observational framing to depict urban life and familial microtensions, highlighting characters' vulnerability and alienation within social and institutional structures. This combination of aesthetic and social sensibility has resonated across Sinophone cinema, finding renewed expression in Anthony Chen's work. In terms of film aesthetics, Anthony Chen adopts Edward Yang's calm, realist approach through long takes, symmetrical or confined framing, and subdued color palettes, situating these techniques within Singapore's socio-environmental context. "Ilo Ilo" foregrounds spatial constriction and domestic hierarchies, while "Wet Season" uses persistent rainfall and gray-blue tones to convey emotional repression, generating a "tropical realism" distinct from Edward Yang's urban coolness. Narratively, Anthony Chen extends Edward Yang's microcosmic observation of family to transnational labor, language variation,

and social hierarchies. The interactions between migrant caregivers and employers, or between teachers and students, reflect structural inequalities and gendered concerns, echoing Edward Yang's ethical observational approach while addressing region-specific social issues. To conclude, Anthony Chen's films demonstrate how Edward Yang's urban realism continues to inform Sinophone cinematic aesthetics while undergoing transformation through regional, social, and transnational lenses, highlighting the enduring influence of Taiwan New Cinema on the aesthetic genealogy of Sinophone films.
**Keywords:** Sinophone cinema, Edward Yang, Anthony Chen, cinematic influence, Taiwan New Cinema, urban realism

[246] Laura Lettere (Sapienza University of Rome). *The Role of Buddhist Translations in Introducing Arguments against Creationism in Early Medieval China.*
**Abstract.** Two refutations of Īśvara or Zizai tian 自在天 as a god-creator were translated in China between the end of the 4th and the early 5th century CE. One of these arguments is articulated within the Shi'er men lun 十二門論 (Twelve Gates Treatise, T1568), traditionally attributed to the revered Nāgārjuna, and possibly translated by Kumārajīva. The second refutation is in the eighteenth chapter of the Fo suoxing zan 佛所行讚 (T192), the translation of Asvaghosa's Buddhacarita, a section of the poem only preserved in Chinese and Tibetan. The two refutations appear remarkably similar to each other, suggesting a shared context of production - one possible antecedent being the Yogācārabhūmi. This study will shed light on the transmission and adaptation of these ideas in Medieval China. In fact, while in India the Buddhist refutation of Īśvara was primarily directed at countering theistic traditions like Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, in China, to the best of our knowledge, there was no consistent worship of a supreme god-creator of the world and philosophers where not yet troubled by the logical problems posed by monotheism. Centuries after their introduction in China, the arguments against Īśvara proved valuable in constructing Buddhist arguments against the idea of Dao - as articulated by Daoxuan's 道宣 (596–667) in the Ji gujin Fo Dao lunheng 集古今佛道論衡 (T2104) -, extending their influence to Modern disputes against Christianity.
**Keywords:** Creationism, God, Monotheism, Logical refutation, Buddhism, Logic

[248] Jinxue Chen (Northwestern University). *Qiao, Anarchist Geography, and Work-Study Movement.*
**Abstract.** This paper focuses on the writing and activities of the Paris-based Chinese anarchist Li Shizeng(1881-1973). It argues that Li develops an anarchist politics of mobility that detaches migration from imperial expansion and reimagines the qiao as an agent of mutual aid and social transformation. Reading Li's writing on Qiao through the lens of anarchist geography and his work with Chinese laborers in France during World War I, the paper shows how his ideals were enacted in compromised form through the work-study movement and labor education. Against national imperialist model that treats the overseas Chinese as colonial agents, Li imagines migrant workers as political actors capable of forming new social relations beyond state citizenship.
**Keywords:** diaspora, imperialism, anarchism, citizenship

[253] Sen Huang (University of Oxford), Yishu Wu (University College London) and Nicoletta Pesaro (Ca' Foscari University of Venice). *To Consume or to Be Consumed: Female Body Destruction in Contemporary Sinophone Literature and Film.*
**Abstract.** Why is the female body so often destroyed? And what happens when women refuse this destruction—when they seize the power to destroy in return? This panel investigates the recurring trope of the violated female body and its contemporary reconfigurations through acts of resistance, destruction, and consumption in Sinophone literature and film.
In Chinese literary traditions, female bodies have long served as sites of consumption and decay. From the gradual ruin of the Twelve Beauties of Jinling in Dream of the Red Chamber to numerous modern narratives shaped by patriarchal aesthetics, women are often portrayed as spiritually drained, physically exploited, or symbolically devoured. Yet recent Sinophone works present alternative visions in which women contest and even invert this paradigm. This panel examines how contemporary writers and filmmakers reimagine the relations between agency, affect, and violence through acts of eating, cooking, and ecological decay.
The first paper analyzes Deadly Delicious (2008) and Lost in Perfection (2023), showing how food—traditionally associated with nourishment and care—becomes a weapon of vengeance and a vehicle for female solidarity. The second explores symbolic cannibalism in Li Ang's The Butcher's Wife (1983), Lilian Lee's "Teochew Alley" (2013), and Zhang Yihe's Mrs. Liu (2011), where domestic labor turns subversive. The third, drawing on ecocriticism, examines A Lai's Red Poppies (1998), linking the destruction of women's bodies with environmental degradation.

Together, these papers reveal how contemporary Sinophone texts transform consumption—literal and metaphorical—into a language of affective and embodied resistance in post-reform China and beyond.
**Keywords:** Women's writing, gender, Chinese literature

**Sen Huang (Oxford University)** – *Why Women Kill and Eat: Female Cannibalism in Contemporary Sinophone Literature*
Cannibalism has long been a recurring motif in Chinese literature. From Pu Songling's Liaozhai zhiyi (聊斋志异, 1740), which records uncanny tales of human consumption, to Lu Xun's modernist critique of a "man-eating" society in Diary of a Madman (狂人日记, 1918) and the "human-blood steamed bun," the act of eating human flesh has served alternately as a symbol of horror and a vehicle for social indictment. Traditionally, male writers have employed cannibalism as a metaphor for moral corruption or collective violence. Yet the meaning of this trope shifts dramatically when the cannibal is a woman and the consumed body is that of her husband. This paper examines Li Ang's The Butcher's Wife (杀夫, 1983), Lilian Lee's "Teochew Alley" (潮州巷, 2013), and Zhang Yihe's Mrs. Liu (刘氏女, 2011) to explore how women confront domestic violence and patriarchal oppression through acts of symbolic consumption. In these works, the domestic sphere becomes a site of resistance, where culinary practices—cutting, salting, cooking, and preserving—are transformed into gestures of defiance and survival. By reimagining the kitchen, a traditionally feminine and nurturing space, as one charged with anger and agency, these authors challenge conventional representations of womanhood, food, and violence. Ultimately, the paper argues that the boundaries between nourishment and destruction, victimhood and empowerment, are destabilized, allowing everyday acts of cooking to emerge as radical expressions of autonomy within oppressive domestic structures.
**Yishu Wu (University College London)** – *Slow Violence: A Reimagination of Female Body Destruction and Nonhuman Extinction in Chinese Ecological Writings*
Slow violence, as described by Rob Nixon in his Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor, refers to the gradual, invisible, and indirect negative impacts of monopolistic power on the ecological systems in poor regions. Vulnerability is generated more dangerously by slow violence. Nixon's views echo much of the literature that engages with images of fragility and ecological apocalypse in marginal areas. In Chinese ecological writings of catastrophes, the representations of a destroyed female body, especially the depictions of rapes and sexual tortures, are often entangled with the scenes of ecological exploitation and animal massacre. Shown in Alai's Red Poppies (尘埃落定,1998), the novel that displays a history of extinction of a hierarchical Tibetan family, the invasions and occupations of new territories are the counterparts of seizing and torturing more young women. Alai employs destroyed women's bodies as metaphors to convey an inevitable history of ecological breakdown, which reflects a civilizational collapse rather than recording a radical environmental disaster. This paper explores Chinese apocalyptic literature that is categorized as reflecting a slow violence that pervades a social cannibalism. Examining Alai's Red Poppies, this paper investigates how the pervasive yet elusive crises of nonhuman entities — such as animals, plants, and climates — share the tragedy of the destruction of female bodies in Twentieth-century Chinese marginal society.

[254] Niko Ruijia Ma (KU Leuven). *Gifts for the emperor: Wang Hongxu 王鴻緒 and European materiality in Qing politics and culture, 1713.*
**Abstract.** This paper considers the context of political and material culture of Wang Hongxu's (1645-1723) offering of more than twenty kinds of xiyang ("from the western ocean") objects for the Kangxi emperor's sixtieth birthday in 1713. The gifted objects had been referenced in previous scholarship in respective of Jesuit activities at the imperial court, and the emperor's interest in European science; this study, on the other hand, investigates why and how xiyang medicine and instruments were meaningful for the Han Chinese scholar-officials who gathered them to offer to the emperor as gifts.
By tracing Wang's career as a bureaucrat and imperial servant, his surprising dismissal in 1709, and his networks, this study presents a social-political context essential to understanding the rationale behind Wang's offering of xiyang objects in 1713. Comparison between his gifts and those offered by imperial artisans and Jesuit missionaries will then uncover how the dismissed official paid close attention to fashionable material vocabularies that emerged in the imperial circle, following the Kangxi emperor's shifting interests in measurement, medicine, etc.. Wang's case presents how Han Chinese officials in the Kangxi period actively navigated the precarious world of politics by mobilizing new material cultures of the "western ocean," illustrating, in the meantime, how xiyang objects participated in the broader cultural transformations in elite society of the Qing during the early decades of the

eighteenth century.
**Keywords:** Wang Hongxu (1645-1723), Kangxi Emperor, Qing political culture, Material culture, Europe in China, gifts, Han Chinese scholar-officials, Science and medicine in early Qing

[255] Meng-Hao Li (University of Zurich). *Secrets, Shame, and Responsibility: Reimagining the Descendants of White Terror Perpetrators.*
**Abstract.** This paper investigates how contemporary Taiwanese literature reimagines the affective and moral struggles of the descendants of White Terror perpetrators. Through close readings of Shi You-xi's Shadow of Light (光的闇影, 2020) and Chen Chien-cheng's Millennium (在世紀末不可能發生的事, 2023), I explore how family secrets mediate the intergenerational transmission of traumatic history and shape the postgenerational subject's moral positioning toward the past.
Drawing on Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory and Raymond Williams's notion of structure of feeling, I argue that both texts portray postgenerational remembrance as a dynamic process of affective negotiation rather than a passive inheritance. The revelation of family secrets—whether through confession, confrontation, or silence—transforms guilt and denial into practices of moral reflection and self-understanding. By mapping the emotional terrains of shame, complicity, and atonement, these works illuminate how private memory intersects with the broader discourse of transitional justice in post-authoritarian Taiwan.
Ultimately, this paper contends that the descendants of perpetrators are not merely haunted by the legacies of state violence but actively reshape collective memory through re-engagement with familial pasts. The two texts thus outline an emergent affective framework in which the burden of inherited guilt becomes the ground for imagining new forms of responsibility and reconciliation.
**Keywords:** White Terror, Postmemory, Family secrets, Transitional justice, Taiwanese literature

[256] Jessica Imbach (University of Freiburg), Bingbing Shi (University of Oxford), Yue Wang (Shanghai Normal University) and Weiming Gao (University of Freiburg). *Contentious Fantasy Literature: From Industrialization Fantasy and WW2 Time-Travel Fiction, to Weird Horror and Lesbian Femslash.*
**Abstract.** Academic discussions of Chinese fantasy literature have thus far been dominated by two major subfields: science fiction and Boys' Love (danmei 耽美) literature. These genres have justifiably attracted a lot of scholarly attention, as they serve as crucial platforms through which Chinese writers imagine alternative, if not necessarily subversive, political and social visions. Yet, both are only segments of a much larger narrative ecosystem, one in which subversive queer writing coexists with overtly misogynistic works, and narratives that challenge historical orthodoxy appear alongside those offering revisionist fan service to Communist historiography. What accounts for the immense popularity and diversity of speculative fiction in China? This panel explores this expansive ecosystem of Chinese speculative fiction by examining genres and media platforms that challenge aesthetic, social, and political norms in multiple and often contradictory ways. Covering genres from time-travel fiction to queer romance and media forms ranging from animated film to subcultural message boards, we explore why fantasy has become such a varied and often contested narrative logic in contemporary cultural production, thereby also examining the broader socio-cultural and political implications of the Chinese fantasy boom.
**Keywords:** speculative fiction, genre studies, digital media

**Bingbing Shi (Oxford University/University of Freiburg)** – *A Man and His Multiple Women: Gender Politics and Alternative History in Chinese Online War Fiction*
Spy Mission: Go Undercover and Get Five Salaries? (Diezhan: Rang ni wodi, ni ling wu fen gongzi? 谍战: 让你卧底, 你领五份工资？) is a popular online novel serialized on Qidian since October 2024, belongs to the military fiction section and has received over 50,000 recommendations. It tells the story of Zhao Xuan, a contemporary police officer who accidentally travels back in time to the Second Sino-Japanese War and assumes dual identities of a spy and the son-in-law of a traitor in the Japanese puppet government. With the help of an AI tool, Yidisi, that enables mind-reading, Zhao navigates between competing political and romantic allegiances, including the KMT, the CCP, the puppet government, his wife, his sister-in-law, and his superior. Focusing on this novel, this paper unpacks the narrative formula for this type of online war fiction. It examines how the combination of romance and espionage, especially in stories featuring a male protagonist surrounded by multiple female characters, has been used to construct fantasies of masculine heroism. This raises a long-standing controversy in popular war fiction: whether the war trauma can be romanticized, sexualized, and made pleasurable, or whether it should be as serious and tragic as possible. Although people criticize online fiction for distorting history (cuangai lishi 篡改历史), a large

number of readers greatly enjoy and love it. By examining readers' responses, this article discusses how gender politics in online fiction shape readers' perceptions of war and generate alternative modes of historical narration.

**Yue Wang (Shanghai Normal University)** – *Body, Affect, and Queering Green Snake: The Femslash of Chinese Animated Series White Snake*

This paper explores "QingBai femslash" fan fiction that reimagines the relationship between Xiaoqing (小青) and Xiaobai (小白) from Light Chaser Animation's White Snake trilogy (White Snake: The Origin, White Snake 2: The Tribulation of the Green Snake, and White Snake 3: Afloat) as a queer romance. Leveraging "queer" as both a noun (an umbrella term roughly synonymous with LGBTQ+) and a verb (the act of resisting heteronormativity) and viewing femslash as the intersection of these two meanings, the study uses queer and affect theories to uncover deeper implications beyond fictional texts. It examines how fandom narratives challenge heteropatriarchal norms and human-centric discourses by presenting love and relationships beyond traditional frameworks. While the films offer a queer subtext that resonates with fans, particularly queer women, censorship limits explicit portrayals, often leading academics and critics to frame Xiaoqing and Xiaobai's bond as mere "sisterhood." In contrast, QingBai femslash redefines these dynamics, affirming lesbian identities and creating a counter-discourse that centers queer intimacy and embodiment. Drawing on one representative fan fiction text, Interviews with Demons (Yaoguai Fangtan 《妖怪访谈》), the study illustrates how fan fiction transforms ambiguous queer subtexts into explicit depictions of romantic and sexual connections. By emphasizing bodily sensations and pre-linguistic emotions, QingBai fan fictions expand the idea of love beyond social norms, enriching queer imagination and identity politics in Chinese literature and culture.

**Weiming Gao (University of Freiburg)** – *Cross-media Weird Fiction's Transgression and Subversion of Science Fiction: A Study on SCP Foundation in China*

Weird fiction, particularly the New Weird, has increasingly become a part of popular culture in China since the 21st century. Due to specific ideological factors in China, horror cannot be directly recognized as a mainstream genre. Consequently, weird fiction, which is related to but vaguely classified under science fiction (sf), occupies this unique position. More than just a literary genre, weird fiction widely transcends the boundaries of art forms, extending into films, television, board games, and video games. The SCP Foundation is one of the most widely disseminated weird subcultures in China with a large fan community that has created lots of fan fictions, short videos, and commentary pieces. Its unique experience of being labeled as a cult in China precisely demonstrates its significant influence. Besides the SCP Foundation, other similar weird cultures such as Analog Horror and The Backrooms have also been spreading and gaining popularity in China since the 2020s, continuously pushing the boundaries of cross-media sf art in similar patterns. Represented by the SCP Foundation, these cross-media weird fiction works challenge conventional understandings of sf literature, film, and media boundaries, exploring diverse formats and constantly innovating speculative ideas, thus greatly expanding the scope of imaginative expression. Of particular note is the pseudo-realistic atmosphere created by these weird fiction works, which has strong ties with urban legends, leading to more complex interactions between fictional content and the real world.

**Jessica Imbach (University of Freiburg)** – *"Steel is the most romantic thing in the world": Reading Industrial Time-Travel Fiction as Sovereignty Fantasy*

This talk examines the intersection of China's "Industrial Party" (gongye dang 工业党) ideology and time-travel fiction in contemporary Chinese popular culture. The "Industrial Party" refers to a distinctive composition of Chinese netizens who champion technocratic governance and rapid industrialization as pathways to national strength. Sharing similar conservative views as the US and European alt-right, they also position themselves as critics of the identity politics of what they term the "Emotional Party" (qinghuai dang 情怀党).One of their most prominent cultural expressions is speculative time-travel fiction, in which protagonists leverage future knowledge to accelerate China's development. Focusing on Qi Cheng's 齐橙 highly successful novel Daguo zhonggong 大国重工 (Great Power, Heavy Industry, 2021), this paper examines the speculative poetics of the industrial time-travel novel by introducing the concept of "sovereignty fantasy" - a mode that blends alternative industrial history with (masculinist) fantasies of national empowerment through technological supremacy. Furthermore, I argue that these industrial time-travel narratives exemplify how fantasy fiction more broadly has become a central, "meta-political" site for contemporary debates on history and national identity, thereby also providing, among other things, a platform for reactionary ideologies and anti-feminist rhetoric.

[263] Xiaohan Shi (Universitat Pompeu Fabra) and Pilar Medina-Bravo (Universitat Pompeu Fabra). *Digital Sexuality Education in Intercultural Contexts: Mapping the Digital Spaces Used by Young Adult Children of Chinese Migrants in Spain.*

**Abstract.** This study examines how young adult children of Chinese migrants in Spain access and engage with sexuality-related content in digital environments. Previous research (Lameiras, Carrera, and Rodríguez 2016; Kim and Ward 2007) has highlighted both the persistent silence surrounding sexuality within many Chinese families and the limited implementation of affective-sexual education in Spain. In this context, digital media, particularly social and mobile platforms, play an increasingly central role in young people's informal sexual learning, offering anonymity, immediacy, and access to topics rarely addressed offline.

Drawing on feminist and intersectional perspectives, this research uses a bilingual online questionnaire to map participants' digital practices. Eighty responses were collected, providing an overview of platform preferences, motivations, and the topics most frequently encountered. Patterns suggest that participants navigate a combination of Chinese-language and global social media platforms. These spaces are used for a wide range of purposes, from seeking factual information on sexual health to engaging in peer-based discussions about relationships, consent, emotional well-being, and gender norms. Their digital choices appear shaped by linguistic repertoires, intercultural positioning, and the lack of reliable or culturally resonant offline sources.

By identifying where and how diasporic Chinese youth in Spain encounter sexuality-related information online, this study contributes to broader debates on digital sexuality education, migrant youth experiences, and the cultural negotiation of intimacy and gender. The poster presents this mapping as an essential lens for understanding the digital ecologies that structure sexual learning in transnational contexts.

**Keywords:** Digital sexuality education, Chinese diaspora youth, Sexual socialization, Social media, Sinophone studies, Intercultural communication

[265] Alina Afonaseva (Institute of China and Contemporary Asia of the Russian Academy of Sciences). *Mapping the Expanding Structural Role of Overseas Chinese High-Tech Enterprises in China (2000–2023).*

**Abstract.** This paper contributes new empirical and conceptual insights into China's innovation system by analysing the structural role of overseas Chinese (huaqiao–huaren) entrepreneurs in the development of high-tech industries. Although returnee entrepreneurship is recognised as a driver of technological dynamism, its scale and long-term impact remain insufficiently quantified. This study addresses this gap through a methodological framework and a longitudinal dataset tracing the evolution of diaspora-linked high-tech enterprises in the PRC.

The analysis draws on primary data collected in 2023–2024 on 290 companies founded by winners of the "Key Business Teams of Overseas Chinese (2009–2017)" competition, together with the author's earlier 2010–2011 research on innovative returnee enterprises. The methodology reveals a major expansion of overseas Chinese high-tech firms—from 1.9 thousand in 2000 to 201.5 thousand in 2023—and an increase in their share among all Chinese high-tech enterprises from 8% to 63.5%. This growth contributes to structural upgrading, greater competitiveness, and technological advancement within China's high-tech sectors.

Evidence from 181 high-tech firms (including 130 innovative companies) shows that founders' transnational education and work experience—particularly in the United States, Canada, EU countries, and Japan—serve as key drivers of technological capability and knowledge transfer. These firms hold strong or leading positions across major manufacturing and service industries and are concentrated in coastal innovation clusters.

The paper argues that overseas Chinese entrepreneurs have become a decisive force in China's high-tech transformation and offers a new empirical basis for understanding diaspora-linked actors in the PRC's innovation system.

**Keywords:** China's high-tech sector, overseas Chinese enterprises, high-tech firms, industry positioning, technological capabilities

[269] Anastasia Sinitsyna (Asia Centre, University of Tartu), Elo Süld (Asia Centre, University of Tartu), Agnieszka Nitza-Makowska (Asia Centre, University of Tartu) and Mart Tšernjuk (Asia Centre, University of Tartu). *CHINA'S STRATEGIC CONCERNS AND EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES.*

**Abstract.** The rapidly changing global political and economic landscape creates new opportunities in some regions while placing additional pressure on others, reshaping the dynamics of global power competition and its tools of influence. Together, these shifts compel China to reconsider its strategic behaviour across key geopolitical regions that have long been central to its political and economic engagement. Addressing the global interplay between opportunity, vulnerability, and risk, this panel examines how both traditional regions of Chinese influence and

newly emerging areas perceive and respond to China's ambitions, and how China adjusts its regional and global strategies in a transforming international environment.
The first presentation examines China's growing ambitions in the Arctic, analysing how Beijing seeks to reshape sovereignty and governance in the region as an emerging arena of global rivalry. The second paper turns to the Middle East, using the United Arab Emirates as a case study to assess both the potential and the contradictions inherent in China's strategic approach to a region marked by complex security dynamics and shifting alliances. The third presentation focuses on the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), situating it within the framework of the "all-weather friendship" and evaluating whether this strategic partnership represents a durable opportunity for China or a source of long-term concern, drawing on extensive fieldwork conducted in Pakistan, China, and the United States. The panel concludes with an analysis of Taiwan's New Southbound Policy (NSP), exploring how Taipei leverages the policy to strengthen its political autonomy and diversify its partnerships amid intensifying U.S.–China competition.
Together, these contributions offer a nuanced, multidimensional perspective on China's strategic ambitions, and how they are transformed, received, and constrained by the risks, limitations, and opportunities shaping its global engagement.
**Keywords:** China and the Middle East, Arctics, China–Pakistan Economic Corridor, Taiwan

**Anastasia Sinitsyna (University of Tartu)** – *When the Dragon Becomes a Polar Bear: China's Arctic Strategy and Economic Ambitions*
Due to rising insecurity in existing maritime routes in the Strait of Malacca and increasing tensions with the United States linked to the trade and tariff war, China is searching for new shipping routes as well as opportunities to expand its global influence and leadership. The Arctic appears to be an ideal solution. Economically, China seeks access to the Arctic's substantial energy and mineral resources and aims to leverage the Northern Sea Route to reduce shipping times and costs. Strategically, it seeks to secure its national security interests, bypass vulnerable choke points such as the Strait of Malacca, and reshape global governance institutions to better align with its interests and its vision of a "community with a shared future for mankind." The current presentation will discuss how and why China is working to reshape sovereignty and governance in the Arctic region, positioning it as a new battleground in great-power competition.
**Elo Süld (University of Tartu)** – *Assessing the Limits of the China Strategy in the Middle East, with a focus on AUE?*
This paper examines the limits of China's strategic approach in the Middle East, focusing on the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as a case study that reflects both the potential and the internal contradictions of Beijing's foreign policy conduct. China's economic presence and influence may expand rapidly, but without corresponding political deepening and normative adaptation (values and societal particularities) to its partners' expectations—such as those of the UAE—its impact remains superficial and unsustainable. The analysis identifies four main constraints. First, conceptual reductionism – China interprets Middle Eastern dynamics primarily through economic reciprocity, underestimating the significance of identity, prestige, and security concerns. Second, normative rigidity (values and societal particularities) – rooted in the principle of non-interference, which limits Beijing's ability to act as a contextually responsive political partner. Third, selective soft power – China's value framework lacks the cultural and institutional resonance that Western modernization narratives maintain in the Gulf. Fourth, strategic over-differentiation – China's cooperation mechanisms in the region remain fragmented and weakly coordinated, reducing strategic coherence and the sustainability of its influence. The UAE's global strategic posture, exemplified by the Emirates Polar Programme and its engagement in Arctic cooperation frameworks, illustrates how a small state can expand autonomy beyond the structures of great-power competition. The paper concludes that the limitations of China's strategy lie less in external resistance than in the internal assumption that economic interdependence automatically translates into political influence. Methodologically, the study relies on semi-structured interviews with Emirati diplomats and policy analysts, and content analysis of official UAE and Chinese strategic documents.
**Agnieszka Nitza-Makowska (University of Tartu)** – *China–Pakistan All-weather Friendship: Beijing's Opportunity or Concern?*
Launched in 2013, the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) sealed the so-called "all-weather friendship" between Beijing and Islamabad and became an umbrella framework for their multidimensional relations. Framed as a flagship of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), CPEC reflects both opportunity and risk for China. On one hand, the project offers Beijing strategic depth, access to the Arabian Sea, and a testing ground for its multifaceted strategic, political, economic, environmental, and soft-power–related inroads into a partner state. On the other

hand, it exposes Beijing to growing reputational and security challenges stemming from Pakistan's fragile governance, local discontent in Balochistan, and environmental controversies surrounding coal-based energy projects. In the broader picture, the analysis situates CPEC within the evolving China–US rivalry, the emerging Pakistan–China–Russia axis, and India's countervailing role—ranging from its legal objections to CPEC's route through Gilgit-Baltistan to its strategic convergence with Washington and competing connectivity initiatives. Alongside an extensive literature review, the paper draws on fieldwork conducted in Pakistan, China, and the United States to assess the extent to which the "all-weather friendship" represents Beijing's strategic opportunity—or a source of concern.

**Mart Tšernjuk (University of Tartu)** – *Taiwan's New Southbound Policy (新南向政策): A Strategy of Autonomy Through People and Partnerships*

This paper examines the New Southbound Policy (NSP) (新南向政策) as a political strategy for strengthening Taiwan's independence in an era defined by U.S.-China rivalry. While earlier, commercially-driven "Go South" efforts (南向政策) failed to reduce economic dependence on the mainland, the 2016 NSP operates by focusing on building strong, resilient, and reciprocal partnerships. This paper argues that the NSP succeeds because its diplomacy prioritizes "warm power"—fostering ties through education, culture, and talent exchange—over reliance on traditional infrastructure lending. The most significant empirical proof of this success is the sustained increase in strategic investment toward NSP partner nations, which has demonstrably reduced Taiwan's reliance on the mainland market over the past decade. This fundamental shift in capital flow demonstrates that Taiwan's political mandate for reducing risk has translated into a market reality. By intentionally creating a new resilient network with key democratic partners in the Indo-Pacific, the policy is establishing a new and more secure global standing for Taiwan, fundamentally strengthening its regional autonomy.

[270] Xiaojing Guan (Beijing Academy of Social Sciences), Loretta Kim (University of Hong Kong), Elvin Meng (University of Chicago), Sarah Bramao-Ramos (Bates College) and Julia Schneider (University of Hamburg). *Imprints, Classrooms, and Incense: Knowledge Circulation, Shared Spaces, and Entangled Banner Identities in the Qing Empire 书籍、课堂与香火：清代知识流通、共享空间与旗人身份的交织.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines how identities in the Qing Empire (Ma. Daicing gurun) were shaped by spiritual and linguistic practices that were neither strictly classifiable nor defined as belonging to a single group. Although many early modern empires were multilingual and polyethnic, the four papers in this panel focus on three major intersections between languages, social practices, and identity formation, drawing on three sub-themes that characterized the Qing and also shed light on how individuals and groups shaped a multicultural China before the twentieth century. Elvin Meng, Loretta Kim, and Sarah Bramao-Ramos examine how knowledge circulated through the production and consumption of Manchu-Chinese texts. Guan Xiaojing and Elvin Meng elucidate how shared space was both physical and literal through their respective studies of banner family shrines with both Manchu- and Chinese-language stelae, and the application of principles and forms of Chinese grammar pedagogy to hybridized textbooks for Manchu grammar. Sarah Bramao-Ramos and Loretta Kim explore how the Manchu language was used to discuss concepts and customs in ways that blurred the distinction between what was "Chinese" and "Manchu." All four papers contribute to the ongoing debates about the identities of people in the Eight Banners, which were not rigidly ethnic but were variegated blends of linguistic, cultural, and social attributes that were subsequently divided and attributed to different groups after the end of the Qing.

**Keywords:** Banner Identities；, Manchu-Chinese Knowledge Circulation；, Shared Ritual Spaces；

**Xiaojing Guan (Beijing Academy of Social Sciences)** – *Banner Temple? Family Shrine? Banner "Family Shrines" in Qing Beijing through Manchu and Chinese Stelae 旗庙？家庙？清代京师旗人的家庙及身份认同*

The Eight Banners were the Qing's unique military-civil registry, its multi-ethnic bannermen, dominated by Manchu, living in Beijing while dwelling apart from the Han populace. Yet inside the capital's countless temples, the two groups met as equal worshippers before the same deities, leaving hundreds of bilingual stelae that record ritual-vessel donations, incense associations, and land endowments. A distinctive subset of these inscriptions commemorates banner "family shrines."

Drawing on Manchu and Chinese language stele texts, this paper charts why such shrines were founded, their varying architectural and ritual types through two micro studies—a group of Manchu "family shrine (jia miao 家庙)" erected inside the Inner City during the Qianlong reign and the "banner temple (qi miao 旗庙)" maintained by the Imperial Guards' battalion near the Old Summer Palace. Through these cases, this paper explores how

bannermen of the Qing capital used varying forms of family-shrine worship to articulate their complex and shifting identities.

**Loretta Kim (University of Hong Kong)** – *An Ethnicized Martial Ethos?: The Art of War and the Alignment of Manchu and Chinese Mindsets*

This paper examines the Manchu translation of the Art of War (Sunzi bingfa 繙譯孫子兵法), published in 1846 (twenty-sixth year of the Daoguang reign) by the Juzhentang (聚珍堂 ) in Beijing, as a text that elucidates how readers were exposed to the work's philosophical content through the lens of the Manchu language. The first part of the study will discuss the sociocultural context in which this text was translated and published. The second section will give examples of the “pairing” of details from the original Chinese and the translated versions, which will then be analyzed in the third part from the perspectives of readers who are either familiar with the former or lack prior exposure to it. This research concludes with interpretations of how a quintessentially “Chinese” text became part of the Manchuphone canon.

**Elvin Meng (University of Chicago)** – *Empty Words of a National Language; Or, How Students of Manchu Invented Chinese Grammar*

It is well known that, since the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Daicing (Qing) state sought to maintain the ethnolingual purity of its "national language" through a series of lexicographical compilations and court-endorsed translations of classics. But this institutional standardization of Manchu left many domains of its practice relatively untouched, among them—perhaps surprisingly, given its centrality in language politics across the early modern world—the pedagogy of its grammar. For over two centuries, the usage of Manchu particles, case markers, verbal conjugations, vowel harmony, and other topics were taught to schoolchildren through a genre of Sino-Manchu mixed-language verse called "songs of empty words" (Ma. untuhun hergen-i ucun; Ch. xuzige 虛字歌), whose terminology largely derived from a Sino-Manchu grammatical pamphlet published in Beijing by a Han-Chinese student in 1682. A reconstruction of the discursive and pragmatic milieu of this text connects it to a Chinese pedagogical tradition frequently disparaged and marginalized by contemporary intellectual elites: instructions on using transitional and copular particles for composing examination essays. The introduction of this style of analysis into a Sino-Manchu bilingual environment led to unprecedented changes in the variety and precision of Chinese metalinguistic terminology within the local community. Although these Manchu grammatical texts later influenced both Mongolian pedagogues and early European sinologists in different ways, they remained largely invisible to monolingual Chinese scholarship during both the height of "evidential learning" and the early twentieth century, when intellectuals of a nascent republic looked to European and Japanese models in their search for grammatical modernity.

**Sarah Bramao-Ramos (Hamburg University)** – *Festival Days and Fine Side Dishes: A Manuscript Manchu Primer and the Everyday Life of Learning*

This paper examines a unique manuscript of a Manchu-language primer, offering a rare glimpse into the lived experience of language learning in the Qing Empire. Unlike printed primers that emphasized social etiquette and moral instruction, this undated and anonymous handwritten book — now held in the National Library of Mongolia — mixes dialogues about school with lively exchanges on festival customs, food, and local celebrations. Comparing its contents with printed primers such as The Manchu Preceptor (Ch. Cing wen ki meng bithe; Ma. Qingwen qimeng 清文啟蒙), this paper shows how teachers adapted the format of the language primer to incorporate daily experiences and culturally specific knowledge. In doing so, these teachers transformed the study of Manchu into a means of showing their students how to navigate the multilingual and multicultural worlds of the Qing Empire, suggesting that education itself became a site of hybrid identity formation.

[274] Xinli Zhang (University of Hawaii at Manoa). *A Daoist Confucian: The Formation and Development of Gentry Class in North China Since the Yuan Dynasty.*

**Abstract.** This article focuses on a Jin-Yuan period literatus in North China, Li Junmin, and his dual identity as a Confucian literatus and Quanzhen Daoist. Because of his outstanding achievements in both fields, he was awarded a posthumous title by Kublai Khan. In the Ming and Qing China, his descendants and later literati understood his title to legitimize this dual identity and the practical political, socio-economic, and cultural achievements which followed from the harmonizing of religious values and institutions. Recognition by the Yuan court was understood to be the necessary thread connecting the court to officials and officials to local cultural leaders and institutions (Confucian, Daoist, but also Buddhist and Popular) that permitted local socio-economic development and a significant re-balancing of relations between the center, the bureaucracy, and the local order that recognized a broad range of socio-political statuses and economic privileges and even contributed to the formation of a Chinese

'national identity.' Moreover, in succeeding dynasties, the local gentry's economic, political and cultural privileges were understood to have been founded on the cultural legitimacy of, and the political economy established by, the Mongol emperors. Thus, although dynasties changed three times since the Yuan dynasty, the cultural logic of the Chinese political economy continued. Li Junmin's story is and remained a vivid example of the formation and development of the gentry class in North China. I will also argue the late medieval China of the Jin-Yuan transition was a necessary bridge to the formation of a 'great unified multiethnic state' in the Ming and Qing dynasties.
**Keywords:** Jin-Yuan China, North China, Confucianism, Quanzhen Daoism

[277] Weiying Yu (University of Hong Kong). *Ecological Utopia and Quasi-Ruins: The Making of the MadeIn Art Museum on Chongming Island (Shanghai).*

**Abstract.** The MadeIn Art Museum (2018–) sits on the west side of Chongming Island, a two-hour drive from Shanghai. Occupying eight abandoned henhouses from the 1970s, the museum functions as an alternative art space beyond the traditional "white box" model. It integrates nature and the wild into its aesthetic through large-scale installations and rotating contemporary art exhibitions that explore technological media, performance art, and sculptures fusing Western and Buddhist styles. Despite its rural island setting, the MadeIn Museum serves as a counterpart to Shanghai—the "Magic City"—through its utopian yet speculative spatial narratives.
This paper argues that the MadeIn Art Museum embodies material power within ecological and infrastructural narratives while projecting a speculative vision of the future. First, I analyze Chongming Island's rural landscape and ruins in relation to Shanghai's urban space using Félix Guattari's concept of The Three Ecologies. I examine interactions between human actors and non-human entities (social and material ecology), the island's ecosystem and biosystem (environmental ecology), and the political and affective dimensions of the island's history and culture (mental ecology). Second, I explore how site-specific installations at the museum create aesthetic experiences and spatial narratives within contemporary art's ecological turn, particularly concerning the Anthropocene and the Chthulucene (Donna Haraway). Finally, I examine two recent exhibitions: "Living a Performance Artist's Life: 2023 Performance Art Documentary Exhibition" and "Liu Chengrui: Tiger's Laughing Mouth." These projects represent an art ecology that engages with space and nature through material entities—bodies, poetry on paper, screens, textiles, and plants—as well as the memories of Covid and its aftermath. The exhibition space emerges from the temporality of artist residencies and performance art practices. Together, they cultivate an art infrastructure connecting abandoned factories, island ecology, and both material and immaterial aesthetic experiences at the MadeIn Art Museum.
**Keywords:** MadeIn Art Museum, Alternative Art Space, Chongming Island, Ecological Narrative

[282] Da Gao (University of Edinburgh). *The Dissemination of Northern Chinese White Ware to the Abbasid World, 8th-10th Centuries.*

**Abstract.** White-glazed stoneware first emerged in the mid-6th century northern China, with the wares from Gongyi, Xing and Ding kilns produced exclusively for the Central Plains court. These ceramics are collectively known as "Northern Chinese White Ware" due to their technological succession and integration.
Despite the confines of geographical boundaries and their inherent political attributes, these wares appeared on the Belitung shipwreck (826 AD), an Arab dhow found near the Strait of Malacca, and were systematically excavated along the Western Indian Ocean coast from the 8th to the 10th centuries. This study seeks to answer two critical questions: first, how Northern Chinese White Ware was transformed from political tribute into maritime commodities, and second, what its transmission routes to the Western Indian Ocean were.
To understand the context for the export of these wares, this research first explores the establishment of the trans-Indian Ocean trade system by Muslim merchants between the 8th and 10th centuries, through which significant numbers of Muslim merchants sailed to Chinese ports such as Guangzhou and Yangzhou. The Arabic source Accounts of China and India records that the merchant Sulayman witnessed the "translucent pottery" during his visit to Guangzhou in 851, which, when combined with archaeological evidence from kiln sites, is identified as Ding or Xing ware. Through the methodology that integrates port archaeology and Chinese texts like the Jiu Wudai Shi, this study further confirms that the white ware, originally reserved for the northern court, entered southern ports via the tribute-grant system.
Following its domestic transmission, the Muslim diaspora in these ports served as the crucial intermediaries for the commodification of the white ware. Specifically, the "Muslim headman" in Guangzhou, as recorded in the Accounts, was commissioned to facilitate tribute trade between Muslim merchants and local authorities, which is further corroborated by an account from Pingzhou Ketan. Within the tributary trade, Muslim merchants acquired the white

wares as return gifts and loaded them onto Arab dhows like the “Belitung.” Through transnational networks by Muslim merchants, the ceramics reached Abbasid ports such as Siraf and Basra. By this stage, the ware had transitioned from political tribute to a global commodity. The study then uses ArcGIS to visualise textual records and data from numerous archaeological reports, reconstructing the transnational landscape of the westward transmission of Northern Chinese White Ware.

After entering the palaces of Samarra, the political centre of the Abbasid Caliphate, Northern Chinese White Ware catalysed the birth of indigenous Islamic Samarra-type white earthenware, which local artisans further decorated with cobalt blue pigments to create a new material culture. Similarly, upon reaching the Swahili Coast, these ceramics were inlaid into architecture and Islamic tombstones through the local practice of Bacini, thus acquiring new symbolic meanings. Using Northern Chinese White Ware as a case study, this transnational narrative of merchants and commodities highlights the regional connectivity, as well as the exchange of culture, aesthetics, and technology in the Indian Ocean world during this period of early trans-regional dynamics.

**Keywords:** Northern Chinese White ware, Overseas Dissemination of Chinese Ceramics, Muslim Merchants, Indian Ocean trade, Tributary Trade

[283] Xiaolong Wu (Hanover College), Sheri Lullo (Union College) and Mandy Jui-Man Wu (Hanover College). *Burials and Ethnocultural Construction in Ancient China.*

**Abstract.** This panel and its individual essays address what archaeological, textual, and material culture indicators of diversity and self-proclaimed ethnocultural identity remained throughout the period from between the late second millennium BCE and the 6th century CE when “Han” became firmly developed as a label or sign of the inhabitants of the Central States (Hsu 2009; Elliott 2012:179). These indicators are largely found in burial practices and their residue that display non-dynastic and/or hybrid features that confirm that individuals or groups often maintained multiple identities that showed them aligned not only with the mainstream Dynasty, but also referenced one or more other communities or activities. We have organized the essays according to “type” or “theme,” as opposed to a linear chronology, to point out the wide range of socioeconomic groups, professions, and circumstances as well as the duration of time across which it is now possible to document that a variety of cultural affiliations were conveyed, sometimes even simultaneously, in burials. Examples in the panel come from both inside dynastic areas and from adjacent frontier regions to the north, southwest, northeast and across land and waterways to document multiple routes that ideas, goods, and peoples crossed during this formative period. How and why they did so is reasoned using an interdisciplinary approach to the reconstruction of the historical ethnocultural context.

**Keywords:** ethnocultural identity, archaeology, material culture

**Xiaolong Wu (Hanover College)** – *The Splendor on the Border: The Majiayuan Site and the Complexity of Ethnocultural Identity during the late Warring States Period*

Theme: Cultural Models of Power and Elite Authority

The Majiayuan site, located in Tianshui Shi, Gansu Province, is identified as a third century BCE cemetery of the Xi Rong group under the dominance of the Qin state. Still under excavation, the archaeological work at the site since 2006 have led to six brief reports and numerous research articles and books, and received broad attention in academia, especially on the splendid chariot decorations and body ornaments, its relation to Qin, the cross-Eurasian cultural exchanges suggested by their imagery and metallurgical tradition, and the multiple cultural sources and hybrid identity of the Majiayuan elite. This paper will incorporate the most recent excavation reports and research articles on Majiayuan, and analyze the individual tombs in terms of their burial structure and grave goods and their functions and cultural references, and discuss the complexities of the cultural, social (status and occupation), and gender identities displayed in different sections and tombs of the cemetery and the interconnectedness of these categories of identities. This research will also address the construction of these identities by looking at how the peoples and cultures (cf. Scythians, Sakas, Qin, Rong) referred by the grave goods were portrayed in historical texts and how the textual reputations have had an impact on their symbolic meanings in the Majiayuan context. The diverse mortuary practices and preferences for grave goods suggest a hybrid overarching material culture, but also distinct social identities through different cultural references achieved by symbolic uses of exotic objects and imagery.

**Sheri Lullo (Union College)** – *Miniature Bronze Vessels of the Zhou and their Links to Non-Zhou Bronze Forms and Emphases on Personal Adornment*
Theme: Gender, Cultural Background and Power
Miniature bronze boxes of the late Western Zhou to the Springs and Autumns Period (9th–7th centuries BCE) have long been of scholarly interest for their uniquely small size and innovative forms. Moreover, because they fall outside of developing standards in bronze ritual vessel programs, their function has long been debated. Recent findings suggest, however, that many such vessels were associated with personal adornment and care. For example, where sex has been determined, these miniature boxes were placed with females, and upon excavation, some contained a selection of jade tools, adornments, and carvings. Recent physico-chemical analysis of substance residues in other examples confirm that these boxes were also used to store cosmetics or other materials related to bodily care. With these new insights about function in mind, this research shifts attention back to the forms, technology, decoration and mortuary contexts of miniature bronze boxes from the Western to Eastern Zhou transition period. These facets suggest links, through marriage alliances or distant cultural memories, with non-Zhou neighbors and allies from regions to the north and west. Gathering these ideas together, this paper explores the notion that personal adornment of the face and body were significant markers of identity in death, and that such notions may have been sourced and facilitated via females by a material culture from bordering regions.
**Mandy Jui-Man Wu (Hanover College)** – *Where Did the Souls of Brahmins go? A Religious Minority and the Northern Zhou tomb of Li Dan (506-564)*
Theme: Religious minorities
This paper is about how a religious minority, South Asian Brahmins, maintained their religious tradition and constructed ethnocultural identity in six-century northern China during the time non-Han Chinese leaders ruled China. The presence of Brahmins in China has been documented by written texts; yet, only few archaeological remains from burials that tell us about the life and afterlife of Brahmins. The extraordinary tomb of Li Dan with an Indic name Dasa and his wife was excavated in 2005 where his funerary epitaph reveals his Brahmin caste, and an illustrated coffin shows the hybrid features with various visual traditions. Although scholars have suggested that Li Dan was acculturated into Chinese culture because of the adoption of Chinese tomb structure and a coffin. In this paper, I will argue that the issues regarding ethnocultural identities are much more complicated. By examining both historical and archaeological evidence from China and India, I suggest that the use of Chinese tomb is compromised and reflects their social status. Some illustrations on Li Dan's coffin had never been seen before, for example, cosmological scenes with rivers overlapped with Indian water deities, Naga and Nagini. Although some of the motifs were borrowed from Chinese and Buddhist images, the whole visual program was associated with Brahmanical traditions that show the journey of a Brahmin's soul passing different worlds and reaching brahmaloka, the world of creation. At death, Li Dan was commemorated not only his official ranking, but his ideal place after death, unifying with Brahma, as a Brahmin.

[284] Giovanni Vitiello (University of Naples L'Orientale). *Packaging Transgression: Rhetorical Patterns in Prefaces to Late Imperial Pornographic Fiction .*
**Abstract.** The paper examines a number of prefaces to late imperial pornographic fictional works to explore the rhetorical patterns they employ to present to readers their sexually transgressive narratives. One especially widespread strategy consists of arguing that learning about lewdness can lead readers to cultivate containment and moral behavior. Not by chance, the argument goes, Confucius decided not to excise the immoral songs of Zheng and Wei from the Book of Songs. The notion of history as a didactic mirror also plays a role in such prefatory remarks, some of which maintain that unorthodox histories (yeshi) are a necessary complement to orthodox ones (zhengshi.) Other prefaces claim fiction as the field for the exploration of passion (qing), an irrepressible human trait that is also at the root of sentiments, such as loyalty and filiality, sponsored by orthodox Confucian morality. Some prefaces, on the other hand, unabashedly state that the transgressive narratives they are introducing were written for the sole purpose of entertaining, and exhibit no concerns about their polluting potential. A few of them even go to the extent of praising such narratives for their realism, showing appreciation for their authors' personal experience and deep knowledge of the world of sensuality. These meta-textual documents not only allow us to have an idea about how authors presented their transgressive narratives, but also to speculate on how the latter were perceived by reading audiences.
**Keywords:** late imperial literature, pornographic fiction, prefaces

[293] Frederik Green (San Francisco State University). *Writing Empire through Classical Verse: Japanese Kanshi from Colonial Taiwan.*

**Abstract.** This essay examines how Japanese colonial officials in early twentieth-century Taiwan navigated their encounters with local elites, their roles in Japan's emerging colonial project, and their evolving relationship with the Sinosphere through classical Chinese poetry.

At the turn of the century, as Japan built its colonial empire, it looked to Western powers for models on administering its new territories. From infrastructure to police uniforms, Meiji colonialism appeared distinctly Western. Yet the first generation of colonial officials remained steeped in classical Chinese learning and often articulated their experiences of empire through kanshi, poems written in classical Chinese and drawing on the Chinese poetic canon. While Chinese continued to serve as a key literary language, Japanese intellectuals increasingly grappled with Japan's new identity as an imperial power on par with the West and with the waning centrality of Chinese civilization as Japan's cultural reference point.

Analyzing poems by Nakamura Ōkei (1852–1921) and Momiyama Ishū (1855–1919), this essay shows how kanshi revealed the officials' ambivalent position toward both Chinese literary culture and Japanese imperialism. Torn between admiration and disparagement, these writers struggled to define their relationship to China and to the "civilizing mission" of the Meiji empire over Taiwan, recently seized from the declining Qing. Their kanshi thus expose the contradictions of writing empire through a form deeply rooted in Confucian civilization yet repurposed to articulate Japan's own imperial ambitions.

**Keywords:** Kanshi, Classical Chinese Poetry, Japanese Colonialism, Taiwan, Sinosphere, Empire and Literature

[296] Lijuan Yang (Zhejiang University). *The Transmission of Geology in China during Victorian Era: A Case Study of Dili Quanzhi.*

**Abstract.** Geology, which became an independent discipline in Europe (particularly in Britain) in the nineteenth century, was introduced into China in the mid of 19th century through the translation movement. Dili Quanzhi (1853-1854), compiled by William Muirhead (1822-1900), a missionary of London Missionary Society, was the first book that introduced Victorian geology into China. Through detailed textual studies, the author points out that geological contents in Dili Quanshi were translated from Thomas Milner's The Atlas of Physical Geography (1850), Hugo Reid's Elements of Physical Geography (1850) and Mary Somerville's Physical Geography (1851), and analyzes the translation of geological terms in this book and its influence on later translated works on geology. By comparing the differences of the three editions of this work (1853, 1880 and 1883), the author attempts to explain the reasons why William Muirhead revised his work and the socio-cultural contexts of the transmission of geology in late Qing China.

**Keywords:** Dili Quanzhi, William Muirhead, Geology, Late Qing China

[298] Olga Kozhura (Tel Aviv University). *Between Art and Politics: The "Art of China" Exhibition and Sino-Soviet Cultural Relations, 1940—1941.*

**Abstract.** The exhibition "Art of China" ran in Moscow and Leningrad from 1940 to mid-1941 and became one of the largest and most comprehensive presentations of Chinese art in the USSR. Artworks were collected from museums across the Soviet Union, but the core exhibits came from China as a result of extraordinary efforts in Sino-Soviet cultural diplomacy, particularly given that the exhibition travelled to the USSR and back under wartime conditions. This paper, drawing on archival materials, reconstructs the exhibition's organizational process and analyses the motivations that guided both the Chinese and Soviet authorities. The main question to be addressed is: what role did the exhibition play in Sino-Soviet relations during wartime? The exhibition was exceptional in terms of its chronological and thematic coverage, showing a wide range of exhibits from Shang dynasty archaeological artefacts to late-1930s anti-Japanese posters and drawings. The political and artistic messages of the exhibition were interconnected and encouraged the Soviet visitor not only to admire Chinese art, but also to learn about China's current situation. Examining the exhibition's content, this paper focuses on the image of China that the exhibition aimed to create for Soviet visitors in conjunction with its reception by Soviet professionals and the general public. Drawing on visitor feedback and publications in the Soviet press, the paper demonstrates how the desired image constructed by the Chinese was interpreted and perceived by the Soviet audience.

**Keywords:** Sino-Soviet relations, cultural diplomacy, artistic exchange, exhibiton history

[299] Rubén Almendros (Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy, Academia Sinica), Chloé Musso (University of Strasbourg) and Alan Dai (UCLA). *Unveiling a Forgotten Lingnan: Historicity, Gender and Identity in Lingnan yishi.*

**Abstract.** The mid-Qing vernacular novel The Forgotten History of Lingnan (Lingnan yishi 嶺南逸史) has received limited scholarly attention (Huang 2003, Su and Chen 2004). Completed in 1794 by the Hermit of Huaxi (Huaxi yishi 花溪逸士), the pseudonym of Huang Nai'an 黃耐庵 (c. 1769–1848), and published in 1809, the novel recounts the romantic entanglements of the Cantonese scholar Huang Fengyu 黃逢玉 with Zhang Gui'er 張貴兒, his primary wife of Han origin, as well as with Li Xiaohuan 李小鬟 and Mei Yingxue 梅映雪, two Yao 瑤 female bandits. While drawing on the scholar-beauty (caizi jiaren 才子佳人) tradition, the narrative disrupts its conventions by relegating the love plot to the background, foregrounding a military storyline in which the protagonist trades literary refinement for battlefield prowess, and advancing the author's aim of producing an alternative history of Lingnan — a region whose geographic boundaries were historically fluid.

This panel examines Lingnan yishi from three angles: first, as a regional unofficial history that engages with ethnic diversity while asserting Han cultural superiority; second, as a narrative in which the centrality and alliances of female figures unsettle the norms of the scholar-beauty genre; and third, through its early twentieth-century reception in Vietnam, where it was read as an endogenous literary work informing emerging notions of national identity.

**Keywords:** Qing vernacular novel, Regional fiction, Lingnan studies, Historicity, Ethnicity, Gender, National identity

**Rubén Almendros (Academia Sinica)** – *Exploring Nineteenth-Century Ethnic Guangdong: Lingnan yishi as a Regional Unofficial History*

From its preface onward, Lingnan yishi presents itself as a "forgotten history" (yishi 逸史) aimed at revealing a long-neglected reality absent from official records — namely, the ethnic dynamics at the heart of the Lingnan region. To reach a broader readership, the author consciously minimizes dialectal expressions and embeds his discussion of the region's ethnic diversity within a scholar-beauty romance narrative — then a national best-seller genre — while reaffirming the cultural superiority of the Han people over the Yao female bandits with whom the male protagonist, Huang Fengyu, becomes romantically involved. Beginning with the novel's prefaces and preliminary notes, this paper demonstrates that, despite its fictional and national literary form, Lingnan yishi relies extensively on local gazetteers and historical documents, particularly Qu Dajun's 屈大均 New Discourses on Guangdong (Guangdong xinyu 廣東新語, preface 1700), whose goal is to elevate regional literati knowledge to the status of imperial high culture and to assert the Cantonese people's Chinese identity. Lingnan yishi's assertion of Han superiority draws most directly on the seventh-juan entry "The True Yue" (zhen Yueren 真粵人) — meaning Cantonese of Han origin — which forms part of Qu Dajun's broader investigation into the ethnic groups inhabiting Guangdong.

**Chloé Musso (University of Strasbourg)** – *When Women Lead: Martial Virtue, Female Alliance, and Polygamy in Lingnan yishi*

This paper examines the narrative centrality of women in Lingnan yishi, which both extends and subverts the conventions of the scholar-beauty genre from within. While scholar-beauty fiction regularly features intelligent and capable heroines, Lingnan yishi distinguishes itself through the number of active female characters and the unusual breadth of their roles. The male protagonist, Huang Fengyu, is repeatedly rescued, protected, and even married off through the initiative of women — barbarian princesses, avenging daughters, and cross-dressed travellers — whose actions reshape both the romantic and political dimensions of the plot. The novel presents four strikingly different heroines: some trained in warfare and strategy, others closer to cultivated beauties, yet all marked by courage and by their ability to intervene when the male hero cannot. Two barbarian princesses lead troops to free Huang Fengyu from wrongful imprisonment; another uses insider knowledge of a bandit fortress to defeat her father; a fourth, fleeing danger in male disguise, becomes entangled in political intrigue. Their actions are framed not as disruptions of gender norms but as extraordinary responses to crisis, grounded in filial devotion, vengeance, or loyalty. The most remarkable episode is a mock marriage between two women — one disguised as a man — performed to save a captive heroine. This female alliance temporarily suspends the usual structure of polygamy and places marital agency in women's hands, further marginalising the scholar-hero.

**Alan Dai (UCLA)** – *From Lingnan yishi to Lĩnh Nam dật sử: Demarcating a National Literary Tradition for Vietnam*

Vietnamese readers were first introduced to Lingnan yishi during the 1920s, when it was reprinted and translated as Lĩnh Nam dật sử in the bilingual magazine Nam Phong. However, the translator Nguyễn Bá Trác asserted that the work was not actually Chinese in origin, instead claiming that it was originally written by a "barbarian" from the

uplands of northern Vietnam and then later translated into Literary Chinese by a prince of the Trần dynasty. Nguyễn's discussion centered the question of whether the work "belonged" to China or Vietnam, as he sought to demarcate a national boundary across the fluid cultural borderland of Lingnan by drawing a clear dividing line between the national literary traditions of China and Vietnam. By examining the paratexts of the Chinese and Vietnamese-language editions of Lĩnh Nam dật sử published in Nam Phong, this paper shows how Nguyễn reappropriated Lĩnh Nam dật sử as an endogenous literary work of Vietnamese folk tradition, a tradition that was being imagined and invented anew by Vietnamese intellectuals attempting to negotiate a national identity independent of both the imperial legacy left by China and the colonial control imposed by the French.

[307] Maxim Korolkov (University of Tuebingen), Yuri Pines (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Wicky Tse (The Chinese University of Hong Kong) and Yohei Kakinuma (Waseda University). *War, Violence, and Law Enforcement in Early China.*

**Abstract.** Violence—either externally oriented (war) or domestically oriented (law enforcement)—was endemic to all human societies, and China is not an exception. From the beginning of recorded history onward, we encounter countless discussions about the degree of legitimacy and desirability of violence, who has the right to exercise it, and when it is appropriate to apply it. Our panel will explore multiple tensions behind usages of violence in interstate wars and domestically. In particular, we shall explore differences between usages of violence in interstate and domestic conflicts during the aristocratic Springs-and-Autumns era (770–453 BCE), the tensions between the avowed desire of the early imperial governments to monopolize the use of violence and occasional tolerance and even cooptation of autonomous violent groups, treatment of POW in the Warring States versus the unified empire, and the surprising tolerance of private violence associated with the "wandering knights" (youxia) during the Han dynasty (206/202 BCE–220 CE). We hope the discussion to shed new light on what Mark E. Lewis had aptly named "sanctioned violence in early China."

**Keywords:** Violence, War, Early China, Law enforcement, Conflict

**Maxim Korolkov 馬碩 (University of Tübingen)** – *No Hard Feelings, It's Just Business: Bounty Hunters in Early Imperial China*

Despite their efforts to monopolize military force and pacify their newly unified realm, the early Chinese empires continued to depend on bounty hunters for law enforcement. The Qin and Han legal codes not only authorized armed private individuals to arrest or kill criminals on the state's behalf, but also encouraged cooperation among bounty hunters to enhance the efficiency of unofficial policing. This paper argues that, while such policies were rooted in Legalist assumptions about human nature and motivation, they were fundamentally shaped by the state's limited capacity to police its vast population. Yet this reliance on profit-driven law enforcement threatened the integrity of the state apparatus, as government officials themselves came to view the administration of justice as a source of personal gain. In response, imperial lawmakers developed a sophisticated system of legal checks and balances that both enabled individuals to pursue wealth and social advancement through participation in law enforcement, and simultaneously curtailed opportunities for abuse. They did so through the promulgation of comprehensive, quantifiable scales of crime, punishment, and reward. I further argue that the significance of these measures extended beyond the practical sphere of policing: they also reinforced imperial legitimacy by providing subjects with concrete, normative frameworks for understanding obligation, responsibility, and the limits of legitimate self-interest.

**Yuri Pines 尤銳 (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)** – *Tolerable Price? Aristocratic Wars of the Springs-and-Autumns Era*

Throughout human history wars were accompanied by killing and devastation; but the degree of these varied considerably in time and space. By analyzing modes of warfare and especially its goals during China's aristocratic age—the Springs-and-Autumns period (Chunqiu 春秋, 770–453 BCE)—I will argue that belligerents commonly exercised self-restraint and maintained mutual respect on the battlefield and beyond, which made human and material costs of wars relatively tolerable. These low costs in turn legitimated the multistate system with its inevitable interstate competition; and they explain why anti-war sentiments during the period under discussion generally remained subdued. It was only in the latter half of the Springs-and-Autumns period that we observe seeds of change. In particular, domestic conflicts among rival aristocratic lineages introduced the zero-sum-game mentality, which made war crueler and more violent. With the increasing proliferation of unrestrained violence in interstate warfare as well, the road was paved to the Warring States era.

**Wicky W.K. Tse 謝偉傑 (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)** – *Where Have All the Defeated Gone?—The Treatment of War Captives in Early Imperial China*

This presentation focuses on war captives and aims to unfold their stories of getting integrated into or being employed in diverse ways by the winning side during the Qin and Han Dynasties. The internecine warfare from the late Warring States period until the consolidation of the Western Han dynasty produced a large number of war captives, including both combatants and civilians. As the living defeated, they received different treatments from the Qin and Han imperial states corresponding to their former status and the ways they were subjugated. Different from warfare of the late Warring States period when war captives could be massacred so as to reduce the rivals' martial strength, the early imperial states changed their attitudes toward war captives and usually tried to absorb their enemies as precious human resources rather than killing them all. Therefore, war captives were employed as soldiers, hard laborers, and palace servants, which constituted a significant element of the Qin-Han military and productive forces. Studying the absorption of the defeated into one's army will cast light on the military organization and its culture as well as strategies and tactics in early imperial Chinese warfare. I will also draw examples from the Greco-Roman treatment of war captives so as to provide some hints of cross-cultural comparison.

**Yohei KAKINUMA 柿沼陽平 (Waseda University)** – *Violence and Mafia in Ancient China: The Case of Guo Jie*

In examining violence in ancient China, we cannot overlook the presence of youxia 游俠 (wandering knights or vigilante figures). The youxia bear certain resemblances to the Japanese yakuza or the Italian mafia. One of the most representative youxia of the Han dynasty was Guo Jie 郭解, who operated at the margins of the law and wielded immense influence within broader society. He cultivated connections with political elites, engaged in extralegal activities, and simultaneously enjoyed strong popular support. How, then, did he confront the state? If, as Max Weber has argued, the state is the entity that monopolizes legitimate violence, what was fundamentally different between such state-sanctioned violence and the violence exercised by Guo Jie? How was Guo Jie able to live for many years, exerting force within the imperial order, yet escape legal punishment? This essay investigates the mutually contradictory yet inseparable relationship between the two forms of violence—that of the state and that of the youxia—through the case of Guo Jie.

[308] Yizi Liu (Sun Yat-sen University; Visiting at LMU Munich), Shuye Zhang (Royal College of Art) and Ailin Zhang (Renmin University of China). *Negotiating Meaning: The Cross-Cultural Production and Discursive Entanglement of Chinese Vernacular Images, 18th-21st Centuries.*

**Abstract.** From the eighteenth to the twenty-first century, as China became increasingly integrated into global networks, images served as crucial mediators shifting between commodities, artworks, and vehicles of knowledge. This panel focuses on a range of vernacular images, such as export paintings (waixiaohua), Suzhou prints (Suzhou banhua), and Suzhou embroidery painting (Suzhou xiuhua), produced for or circulated through the global trade system. Long marginalized in conventional art-historical hierarchies, these images derive their significance not from fixed aesthetic values but from dynamic, cross-cultural "biographies" shaped by multiple discourses.

On the one hand, the global trade in popular imagery functioned as a cultural apparatus that selected, named, and visualized Chinese life to conform to Western imaginaries. On the other hand, such externally constructed notions of "Chineseness" were received, reinterpreted, and internalized within local contexts, shaping indigenous formations of cultural identity.

Moving beyond static paradigms of artistic appreciation, this panel explores the agency of these images as active participants in early modern cross-cultural knowledge formation and beyond. By examining the networks linking artists, merchants, collectors, and scholars, we trace the negotiations through which meaning was continually produced and transformed, revealing these once-marginalized folk images as vital materials for understanding how value and meaning were negotiated in the global context.

**Keywords:** Cross-Cultural, Vernacular Art, Global Circulation, Cultural Representation

**Yizi Liu (Sun Yat-sen University)** – *Reframing "Festivity": The Absence and Reconfiguration of Festival Themes in Chinese Export Paintings of the Qing Dynasty*

While festivals and seasonal rituals long occupied a central place in Chinese visual culture, from Song dynasty festival scrolls to The Twelve Months Paintings of the Qing Court such themes are strikingly marginal in export paintings produced for Western markets during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This paper asks why "festivity," so prominent in domestic artistic and social life, appears absent in Chinese export paintings.

I argue that this absence reflects not a lack of representation but a process of reframing. Festival imagery was

decomposed and recoded within other pictorial categories, such as “rituals,” “processions,” or “occupations” to align with Western classificatory and commercial logics. Notably, when these export paintings were repatriated to major museums in southern China in the early twenty-first century, the theme of “festivity” was reidentified, recategorized, and elevated to a central focus of collection and display. This phenomenon underscores the fluidity of classificatory concepts as they evolve across cultural and historical contexts.

By tracing how “festival” was translated, displaced, or silenced in global visual exchange, this study highlights the negotiation of meaning between Chinese and Western folk epistemologies. It further demonstrates how export paintings functioned as sites where vernacular imagery was continually recontextualized, exposing the epistemic gaps and cultural translations that shaped early modern visual globality.

**Ailin Zhang (Renmin University of China)** – *Shaping Jiangnan: The Global Circulation and Meaning Production of Suzhou Prints in the British Museum*

The British Museum currently holds over eighty pieces of Suzhou prints from the High Qing period, which are rare treasures among early Chinese New Year prints. However, no systematic study has been conducted on them to date.

This study traces the life trajectory of Suzhou prints from the Kangxi and Qianlong periods, now housed in the British Museum, following the flow of objects from their production in Jiangnan workshops to their display in overseas exhibitions. During the production phase, these prints, created by Suzhou artisans, integrated the refined and popular tastes of the urban class with the worldly concerns of the literati, becoming visual representations of social transformation in Jiangnan. Subsequently, carried by merchant ships and envoys, the prints traveled east to Japan and west to Europe, eventually finding a place in the British Museum’s galleries. There, they serve as key references for imagining Jiangnan abroad, continually reshaping their meanings through exhibition interpretations and viewer engagements.

By mapping this spatiotemporal network of circulation, this paper explores how material culture, through the global journey of Suzhou prints, acquires renewed significance across recurring cycles of time.

**Shuye Zhang (Royal College of Art)** – *Thread a Needle: Image Creation and Cross-Cultural Transmission of Suzhou Embroidery Painting*

Building on the other two papers focusing on the global transmission of images in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this research investigates how images are created in Suzhou embroidery paintings and their global transmission from the twentieth century onward. Suzhou embroidery, originating from the city of Suzhou, is one of the most highly valued crafts in China. Since the policy of reform and opening-up in 1978, it has gradually deviated from utility purpose to become embroidery painting for appreciation.

This paper examines both how Suzhou embroidery was created for export in the twentieth century, and how a selection of Suzhou embroidery paintings was collected in international museums like the British Museum in the twenty-first century. This further triggers the ongoing debates about how Chineseness is created and interpretated within a global context.

The discussion of meaning is complex in this case. On the one hand, the study of embroidery painting is always beyond images, as it concerns the value of making and skills transmission within the craft framework. On the other hand, there is a long tradition of imitating paintings in Suzhou embroidery, causing the ongoing negotiation of the hierarchy of craft and art. This paper aims to challenge the traditional framework of aesthetic hierarchy of different medias, and understand images, craft techniques, cross-cultural transmission and the creation of meaning of Suzhou embroidery painting in a comprehensive way.

[310] Yongli Li (College of the Holy Cross). *The Decade of the Wende: Chinese film distribution in East and West Germany in the 1980s.*

**Abstract.** During the Cold War era, the transnational circulation of films—including production, distribution, and exhibition practices—was heavily influenced by the era’s polarized political ideologies. This paper analyzes the distribution and exhibition of post-Mao PRC films in the divided Germany during the 1980s, a decade that marked both China’s gradual transition from a Mao-era nationalized system to early marketization reforms and shifting diplomatic relations between the PRC and the two Germanys, pivoted and reshaped in the 1970s. The cultural productions, for instance, films from the PRC. As China reintroduced its films to Europe, its distribution strategies diverged. During the process, unlike the ideologically driven distribution approach of the 1950s, which favored war films and spy films, the PRC in the 1980s distributed mainstream popular genre films in East Germany. In West Germany, Chinese films were mainly presented through retrospective film weeks and at international film festivals. My research builds on that discourse by conducting a micro-level cultural analysis of Chinese film distribution in in

1980s East and West Germany, examining the government policy, agency, geopolitics, as well as audience reception involved in the transnational flows. I argue that film distribution practices in the two Germanys during this period complicate the narrative of ideologically driven Cold War film circulation. This paper employs archival research across multilingual sources, distribution company records, film criticism, as well as case studies of specific film releases. By doing so, this paper contributes to the broader scholarship on transnational film circulation and Cold War film history.
**Keywords:** Cold War Film History, Film Distribution, Transnational Cinema

[311] Liang Cai (University of Notre Dame), Tianjiang Cao (Minzu University of China), Chun Fung Tong (University of Hong Kong), Fan Zhang (Tulane University), Yunxin Li (Simmons University), Ruoxuan Wen (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich) and Alexis Lycas (École Pratique des Hautes Études). *From Periphery to Center: State Power, Ideology, and Gender Politics in Early China.*
**Abstract.** This panel brings together scholars from Europe, Asia, and North America to discuss how power was exercised in early China. The field of early China has benefited from both transmitted texts and recently excavated manuscripts. While transmitted texts focus primarily on the center—the theatrical stage for emperors, high officials, and their families—excavated manuscripts reveal the lives of local officials and indigenous populations. The eight papers in this double panel examine the paranoia of officials and emperors generated by performance-legitimacy discourses, including the Mandate of Heaven; explore gender politics—from philosophical texts such as Confucian and Daoist writings, to data mining from traditional sources, to excavated legal cases from Eastern Han China; and investigate how the state used statistics, law, violence, and monuments to penetrate local society, extract and distribute resources, and control both Han and non-Han populations. The panel also shows how individuals—both men and women—acted as agents who exercised power by mobilizing the state apparatus, drawing on the Confucian corpus, and interpreting ideology in their own particular ways.
**Keywords:** Qin-Han dynasties, excavated manuscripts, gender politics, Mandate of Heaven, periphery and center, Confucianism, non-Han population, statistics

**Liang Cai (University of Notre Dame)** – *Paranoia and State Power: The Perils of Performance Legitimacy in Early China*
Han Feizi and Shang Yang argued that severe punishments would instill universal fear, thereby deterring crime. In their view, punishments themselves could eliminate the need for further punishment, ultimately producing a crime-free society. In sharp contrast, Confucian thinkers such as Dong Zhongshu and Wang Jia contended that such draconian measures inadvertently punished the diligent, discouraged the devoted, paralyzed the mediocre—who refrained from initiative for fear of error—and emboldened the petty to pursue self-interest without restraint. This fundamental disagreement over the efficacy of harsh punishment reflects divergent conceptions of how state power should permeate society and how fear might be engineered to regulate public behavior. This paper examines archaeologically excavated manuscripts to reveal how the state sought to weaponize cultivated paranoia as a tool of control, and how individuals, in turn, navigated a system that threatened objective yet cruel punishments but lacked the consistent capacity to enforce them.
**Tianjiang Cao (Minzu University of China)** – *Dynasties on the Accounting Books： Governmental statistics and the state transformation during the Warring States and Qin-Han Period*
This paper proposes that, Central to the documentary administrative apparatus of Qin-Han China was the practice of governmental statistics, which refers to the routine processes of resource calculating, verifying, reporting, and reviewing at various levels of the bureaucracy. These operations constituted a foundational infrastructure that underpinned the state to monitor and control resources within its domain and thereby sustain its rule. Based on recently excavated manuscripts, this study shows that amid the warfare and reforms of the Eastern Zhou period, governmental statistics enabled the Qin state to systematically convert vast resources into manageable documentary inventories. This system facilitated more efficient mobilization of corvée labor, fiscal allocation, and information control than in other competing states, thereby accelerating Qin's ultimate unity of the realm. During the Qin-Han political construction, the operational procedures, personnel organization, and ritual cycles of governmental statistics kept evolving from fragmented practices into systemized mechanisms. This institutional coherence supported effective governance, especially over an expansive territory and population, reinforcing the unified imperial order. Moreover, by integrating with the bureaucratic system through quantified performance evaluations, governmental statistics formed an underlying logic of governance in ancient China—one that facilitated effective administration yet simultaneously generated recurrent governance challenges. While the

imperial ruling mechanism operated through governmental statistics, the system itself acquired a multifaceted and contradictory nature, profoundly shaping the trajectory of Chinese statecraft.

**Chun Fung Tong (University of Hong Kong)** – *Official and Unofficial Communications Between the Han and Non-Han Along the Northern Frontier of the Western Han Empire*

This paper examines different modes of communication between the Han authorities and their non-Han neighbors in the northern frontier of the Western Han Empire. Newly unearthed manuscripts indicate that the early Han regime made use of both official and unofficial channels to engage the non-Han others. To begin with, the paper discusses the official communication facilitated through messengers and betrothed Han princesses and their subordinate officials using legal stipulations from the "Ordinances on Merits" (功令) from the Zhangjiashan tomb no. 336. It then delves into unofficial communication by means of a personal letter sent from the Governor of Longxi 隴西 Commandery to a Yiqu 義渠 prince. Looted from a tomb in Dangjiayuan, Jingning County, Gansu Province, this letter reveals that personal correspondences, spy activities, and intimidations were all instrumental in interacting with and exercising power on the non-Han others. The diverse modes of communication unveil the social, diplomatic, and cultural dynamics in the periphery of early Chinese empires.

**Fan Zhang (Tulane University)** – *Monuments on the Border: Locality of the Stele and Que Gate Tower on Han Dynasty's Southwest Frontier*

This article examines the stone monuments located on the Han Empire's southwest frontier in modern-day Sichuan province during the late Eastern Han dynasty. Carved with inscriptions and decorated with images, the imposing-scale stele and que gate tower served as a nexus of the negotiation among the central government, local officials, and the indigenous population. More specifically, this paper focuses on the stele and gate tower ofFan Min, a governor of the Ba Commandery who died in 203 CE. The lengthy inscription engraved on his funerary stele offers significant insights into his career as well as the political dynamics between the central government and the local society. More importantly, the inscription mentions Fan's handling of the indigenous Qiang ethnic group, shedding light on the relationship between the Han and the non-Han population in the border zone. Then, this paper investigates the pictorial program of the que gate towers standing in front of the stele. I articulate how the local visual vocabularies were integrated into the traditional Han-style timber-framed architecture. Lastly, this paper contextualizes the strategic location ofFan Min's stele and gate tower in the geo-political network on the Han Dynasty's southwest frontier. Erected along the Qingyi Road, a main route connecting regions traditionally inhabited by the Qiang ethnic groups and the provincial center of the Shu Commandery, the two stone monuments became a public statement of the dynasty's political presence on the frontier and the embodiment of the entangled relationship between the Han Chinese and the indigenous Qiang people.

**Beyond Patriliny: Gendered Authority and Household Practice in Early Eastern Han Changsha** – *Abstract This article investigates gendered authority and household practices in early second-century Changsha (ca. 90–112 CE) through an analysis of legal and administrative manuscripts excavated at May First Square (Wuyi Guangchang 五一廣場) in 2010. While confirming existing scholarly consensus on Han women's economic autonomy, it traces the agency of women across various household roles (daughter, sister, wife, mother) to control and protect property by actively employing the state's legal and administrative apparatus through mechanisms like loans, written agreements, and judicial procedures. Furthermore, the Changsha documents reveal significant local divergences from idealized patriarchal norms. Crucially, the article shows that kinship ties between mothers and children often fundamentally superseded affinal ties between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law, evidenced by legal arguments dismissing a mother-in-law's claim over a daughter-in-law's assets on the basis of non-blood relation. Finally, the manuscripts document cases of uxorilocal residence, where the husband's limited status—specifically his failure to provide bridewealth—resulted in him possessing little ground to demand spousal fidelity from his wife. Overall, these findings reveal that family strategies in Changsha were highly pragmatic and adaptable, demonstrating how local populations actively negotiated and utilized state ideology and law to suit economic necessity and individual interests.*

[312] Nora Yitong Qiu (University College London), Sining Lyu (SOAS, University of London), Feiyang Song (University College London) and Xiaoyun Tang (Kings College London). *Gender, Labor, and Crisis in Qing and Republican China.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines how social order was enacted, contested, and imagined across legal, economic, and domestic domains in Qing and Republican China. Each paper foregrounds everyday practices: legal petitioning, artisanal labor, culinary medicine, and human emotions on finance found in newspapers, as sites where authority was negotiated and moral frameworks were rendered visible. Feiyang Song reconstructs women's agency in Qing

legal proceedings across ethnic and status lines, drawing on judicial archives to show that access to justice was conditioned by the intersections of gender, rank, and moral discourse. Sining Lyu turns to the laboring infrastructures of the Qing export economy, tracing domestic production, kin-based skill transmission, and regional specialization, in which sustained imperial manufacture in the absence of industrial wage labor. Nora Yitong Qiu explores the circulation of luxury foods and remedies between kitchens and pharmacopoeias, arguing that culinary medicine enabled claims to care, distinction, and ethical authority within Qing households. Shifting the temporal focus to the 1930s, Xiaoyun Tang examines the ways narrative volatility and media sentiment generated financial panic within a structurally resilient banking system. Using bilingual newspaper corpora and natural language processing, the paper maps narrative contagion across a multilingual press landscape. Taken together, the panel situates governance in state institutions and the regulation of bodies, households, and imaginations of economic and financial life. It brings together archival, digital, and textual methods to illuminate the operation of moral economies across different regimes of scarcity, authority, and uncertainty from the early Qing to the Republican era.

**Keywords:** Gender Studies, Globalization, Consumption, Money, Legal history, Economic history, Financial history, Medical history, LLM Models

**Feiyang Song (University College London)** – *Law, Gender, and Ethnic Governance: Women's Agency in Qing Judicial Cases*

This paper examines women's legal agency in Qing China through a comparative analysis of Manchu, Mongol, and Han cases preserved in the First Historical Archives. Drawing on 60 state level judicial records, including memorials, verdicts, and case reports, I examine women from distinct legal and proto-ethnic background's agency in Qing legal practice. This dissertation analyses women's actions and speech in three domains: access to justice, legal outcomes, and strategic engagement with moral reward systems such as chastity honours. I argue that Qing women's legal agency was contingent, negotiated, and embedded in intersecting hierarchies of gender, ethnicity, and rank, challenging monolithic portrayals of women as passive legal subjects. While gendered moral norms, especially chastity discourse, were applied across ethnic lines in sexual offences, non-sexual prosecutions revealed sharper stratification. Imperial clan women and banner women often leveraged institutional privileges to mitigate punishment or bypass restrictions, while commoners faced harsher outcomes. Because all the Manchus were governed under the banner system, which is a privileged legal, military and economic organization, ethnic affiliation interacted with status, kinship, and moral classification in shaping verdicts. However, the lower status Manchus and Han commoners' distinction gradually faded away in the 19th century.

**Sining Lyu (SOAS)** – *Who Made the Qing Empire? Labor, Skill, and Domestic Production in an Early Modern Economy*

This article reconstructs the production landscape of Qing China by tracing the laboring lives that sustained the empire's export economy. Drawing on local gazetteers, palace memorials, and Jesuit travel accounts, it shifts attention from consumption and long distance exchange to the organization of work within households, workshops, and rural communities. Qing exports drew vast inflows of silver from the Americas and Japan, yet the social history of their production remains only partially understood. Who made these goods, under what conditions, and through what forms of training, discipline, and obligation? This study addresses those questions by examining the allocation of labor within families, the transmission of artisanal skill across gender and age. It argues that Women's labor extended beyond the better studied worlds of cotton and silk weaving and sexual labor into shopkeeping and other forms of commercial activity. By recovering these social and institutional arrangements, the article recasts the Qing economy as a lived structure of skill, obligation, and material effort that both men and women engaged in commercial activities.

**Nora Yitong Qiu (University College London)** – *The Taste of Care: Medicine, Cuisine, and Distinction in Qing Households*

In Qing China, food remained a primary medium of cure at the very moment when empire, commerce, and long distance exchange were altering what could be eaten, prescribed, bought, and known. This article argues that dietetics between 1600 and 1800 turned on a problem of classification: before any substance could heal, it had to be placed within an accepted account of the body, authenticated within circuits of trade, and authorized within a social world of use. Set within a wider Eurasian field that included Chinese, Galenic, Arabic, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Uyghur traditions, the essay shows how curative food joined learned medicine to court routine, literati self cultivation, household practice, and the expanding commerce of pharmacies and rare ingredients. New World crops, maritime exotica, and European drugs did more than enlarge the materia medica. They exposed the labour required to make novelty legible, from chili pepper and sweet potato to cinchona and sea cucumber. The history

of food and medicine therefore reveals a larger feature of Qing rule: imperial plurality did not produce a single medical language, yet it did create a shared political and commercial space in which rival traditions, substances, and claims of efficacy met. Food stood at the centre of that encounter because it entered the body every day.

**Xiaoyun Tang (Kings College London)** – *Financial Panic Without Failure? Public Anxiety in 1930s China*

This paper explores the disjuncture between institutional stability and public panic in 1930s China by examining the financial narrative landscape of the Great Depression, with a focus on the years 1933–1935. While archival banking data suggest that Chinese commercial and public banks largely withstood the global economic crisis, experiencing no widespread collapses or liquidity breakdowns, contemporary newspapers reported significant market anxiety, localized bank runs, and sharp reactions in government bond markets. How did a perception of financial crisis emerge and spread in the absence of systemic failure? The study leverages an original corpus of 72 bilingual newspaper data (Chinese and English), to reconstruct financial narratives circulating among different audiences: domestic savers, foreign investors, and colonial merchants. To extract sentiment, attention structures, and thematic shifts over time, the analysis applies a transformer-based natural language processing framework, utilizing pretrained models fine-tuned for historical financial texts. This allows for a high-resolution mapping of narrative spikes, contagion triggers, and framing patterns across languages and regions. Rather than interpreting the 1930s as a "non-crisis," this paper argues that China experienced a confidence crisis, manifesting through narrative volatility rather than balance sheet collapse. By triangulating institutional data, behavioral indicators, and narrative sentiment extracted through attention-based models, the paper advances a new framework for understanding crisis perception in semi-formal, multi-layered financial systems. It also offers a digital-historical methodology for analyzing multilingual financial narratives in a fragmented media environment.

[319] Hiu Yu Cheung (The Chinese University of Hong Kong), Chih-Yen Huang (Academia Sinica), Rickar Gustavsson (Sun Yat-sen University) and Kin Yip Hui (Hong Kong Shue Yan University). *The Many Facets of Learning: The Production, Application, and Circulation of Knowledge in Middle-Period China, 8th–14th Century.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines how scholars in Middle-Period China (8th–14th centuries) produced, organized, and applied knowledge within shifting intellectual and institutional landscapes. Across the Tang–Song period, China underwent major social, political, and institutional changes, forcing new demands on knowledge and requiring it to address new circumstances. New interpretations of the Confucian classics, along with new forms of political discourse, encyclopedic compilation, and ethical reasoning, emerged in response to changing court ideology, examination structures, and scholarly networks. While China's Middle Period has received considerable attention in modern scholarship, many aspects of its intellectual life remain insufficiently explored. The papers in this panel shed new light on several of these areas by examining how scholars advanced new knowledge within a changing socio-political landscape. They explore how diverse intellectual practices—including classical commentaries, political discourse, and the compilation of encyclopedic reference works—served as vehicles for articulating ideals of governance, negotiating moral authority, and redefining the scope and purpose of learning. Together, the topics in this panel shed new light on how different forms of intellectual production operated within evolving socio-political and institutional contexts, highlighting both the ideas themselves and the dynamic interplay between intellectual practices, social networks, and institutional changes. By bringing together case studies from different periods and genres, the panel illuminates the diverse yet interconnected ways in which Middle-Period thinkers shaped and reshaped the intellectual world they inhabited.

**Keywords:** Tang–Song period, intellectual history, classical learning, political discourse, knowledge production

**Chih-Yen Huang (Academia Sinica)** – *The Political Epistemology of Pleasure in the High Tang*

This essay examines the political significance of pleasure and related discourse during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–756) of the Tang dynasty. Contrary to the long-standing Confucian tendency, which associates indulgence with decadence, Xuanzong articulated a political vision in which pleasure signified peace, stability and prosperity. His thirteen edicts issued in the second half of his reign—drafted by junior officials yet unmistakably shaped by imperial ideology—encouraged short excursions for court officials, authorized leisure within their official schedules, and sponsored large-scale banquets on the eastern outskirts of the capital. Rooted in classical qi theories, the edicts' recurrent metaphors of seasonal harmony and responsive Heaven reveal a coherent intellectual system that linked pleasure to benevolent governance. Their rhetorical structure—patterned allusions to the classics, calibrated moral vocabulary, and cosmological tropes of ganying 感應 (stimulus–response)—constituted a distinct mode of political discourse. Often paired with performative amnesties, these decrees staged

imperial magnanimity while cultivating an affective subjectivity of collective joy among the bureaucracy. Through close rhetorical and intellectual-historical analysis, this study argues that Xuanzong's epistemology of pleasure advanced a moralized model of rulership. Rhetoric here functioned not merely as ornamentation but as a medium of state epistemology—articulating how the regime conceptualized good rulership and imperial benevolence in the High Tang.

**Hiu Yu Jack Cheung (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)** – *Two Voices in the Early Daoxue Interpretation on the Mencius*

The ascendancy of the classic Mencius among Song (960–1279) Confucian scholars since the second half of the eleventh century has been a significant but controversial topic in Chinese intellectual history. Song scholars of different scholarly backgrounds produced a myriad of new commentaries and annotations on this Confucian classic. Particularly, Song neo-Confucianism (daoxue 道學) regarded the Mencius—both the philosopher and the text—as rich repository of political and ethical knowledge that helped to redefine Confucian autonomy. By borrowing a classic model of interpretation on the Roman classical poet Publius Vergilius Maro (Virgil, B.C.70–B.C.19), this article recognizes two confronting voices revolving around the understanding of the Mencius among the students of the Cheng Brothers (Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) and Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–1085)), who have been usually considered as the "founding fathers" of Song daoxue. The public voice, represented by some of the Cheng brothers' students who were more interested in politics and official careers, focuses more on the political messages of Mencius. In contrast, the private voice focuses more on ethical values spread over the Mencius text. By revealing the two voices embedded in the Cheng scholars' interpretations on the Mencius, such as Yang Shi 楊時, Yin Tun 尹焞 (1071–1142), Liu Anjie 劉安節 (?–1116), Liu Anshang 劉安上 (1069–1128) and Wang Pin 王蘋 (1082–1153), we will see how the very nature of daoxue turned inward in the transitional era of the early twelfth century, along with early daoxue scholars' epistemological shift from political realization to ethical awareness.

**Rickard Gustavsson (Sun Yat-sen University)** – *New Learning and the Transformation of Classical Exegesis in the Late Northern Song*

This paper examines intellectual developments in the late Northern Song through the lens of three scholars associated with the so-called New Learning (xinxue 新學) tradition: Lu Dian 陸佃 (1042–1102), Cai Bian 蔡卞 (1048–1117), and Huang Shang 黃裳 (1044–1130). Although New Learning, associated above all with Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086), became the state-sponsored intellectual tradition of the late Northern Song, it has received remarkably little attention in English-language scholarship. This paper looks at how state-sponsored education and examinations under the influence of New Learning provided the principal institutional framework within which—and against which—intellectual developments unfolded in the late Northern Song. It examines how the classical exposition (jingyi 經義) as an examination format, introduced in the 1070s, encouraged a new exegetical approach that deepened engagement with the Confucian classics and led scholars to use commentaries to address emerging questions in philosophy and politics. The paper highlights how Lu Dian, Cai Bian, and Huang Shang, through their readings of texts such as the Shijing 詩經, Erya 爾雅, and Zhouli 周禮, engaged with central concerns of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, including the relation between moral values and nature, the capacity of language to convey abstract meaning, and the role of social institutions in shaping the mind and human nature. It further suggests that these developments helped shape early Southern Song thought, both through continuity and reaction.

**Kin Yip Hui (Hong Kong Shue Yan University)** – *The Apparatus for Penetrating the Way: The Concept and Method of Wang Yinglin's Leishu in the Southern Song*

The term "comprehensive scholar" (通儒) refers to one who is not only thoroughly versed in the Confucian classics but also possesses broad knowledge of various texts, records, and institutional systems. The "Erudite Literary Examination" (博學宏詞科) was regarded as an essential path to becoming a comprehensive scholar. To prepare for this examination, Wang Yinglin 王應麟 (1223–1296) compiled reference works such as Cixue Zhinan 辭學指南 and Yuhai 玉海, which complemented each other and reflected his scholarly method of synthesizing documents. The Cixue Zhinan outlines examination preparation methods and writing principles, functioning as a work of creative theory, while the Yuhai represents the accumulation and interconnection of documentary knowledge over time, embodying the "learning of broad cultural literacy" (博文之學). Thus, the issue this paper seeks to address is: Within the tradition of the Erudite Literary Examination in the Song Dynasty and among intellectuals aspiring to become "comprehensive scholars", how was Yuhai, the encyclopedic compilation with a clear purpose, meticulously constructed? Furthermore, how did its methodology and considerations in organizing topics enhance the crucial role of rhetorical minister (詞臣), thereby advancing the ideal of statecraft (經世) as pursued by

comprehensive scholars? Through this case study, we aim to examine how the late Song intellectuals transcended the boundaries of practical governance, philosophical principles, textual criticism, and belles-lettres by means of encyclopedic compilation.

[320] Clara Galzerano (Institute of Modern History - Academica Sinica (Taipei)). *Rethinking Cold War Diplomacy through Media: The CNA and Taiwanese Foreign Policy in Western Europe (1950–1987).*

**Abstract.** In December 1949, the Central News Agency (CNA, Zhongyang tongxunshe 中央通訊社) relocated from Mainland China to Taiwan, becoming the official agency of the Republic of China (ROC). Despite its central role within the Taiwanese media system, the CNA's influence on domestic politics and international diplomacy remains largely understudied. Its internationalization strategies during the Cold War are, however, crucial to understanding the transformation of Taiwanese foreign policy.

Given its anomalous status in the international community, the ROC adopted unconventional diplomatic strategies. Media outlets became key instruments for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Government Information Office, serving as alternative channels to formal diplomacy. This presentation will argue that the CNA supported Taiwanese foreign policy by cultivating partnerships with foreign news agencies and posting correspondents abroad who served as informal political intermediaries. Through reporting and liaison activities, CNA representatives promoted Taiwan's narrative as "Free China" (Ziyou Zhongguo 自由中國) while casting the People's Republic of China (PRC) in a critical light.

The study examines how CNA activities supported Taiwanese diplomacy in Western Europe from 1950 to 1987, emphasizing the central role of media and news circulation in shaping Cold War dynamics. It employs a historical approach, integrating Taiwanese and European archival materials, published literature, and oral sources.

From the 1950s, the CNA opened branches in London, Paris, and Madrid, later expanding to Rome and Bonn to counter Beijing and Xinhua News Agency's growing influence. In the 1970s, following the ROC's UN exclusion and Sino-American normalization, it reinforced overseas operations in countries recognizing the PRC. These developments occurred alongside an internal debate over the "free flow of information" doctrine. Although keen to follow US media policy and present itself as the voice of "Free China," the CNA struggled to assert autonomy from the Guomindang (GMD, 國民黨) and continued to serve broader national interests.

**Keywords:** Central News Agency (CNA), Cold War Diplomacy, Media Diplomacy, Taiwanese Foreign Policy, Western Europe

[322] Jakub Maršálek (Charles University). *Between the „Eastern Barbarians" and the Xia: the state of Qi in the Spring and Autumn Annals and in the Zuo Tradition.*

**Abstract.** In my paper, I will attempt at giving a hint at a formation of the Xia cultural identity during the Eastern Zhou Period. I will focus on a case study of the small state of Qi, which was situated on the eastern edge of the Zhou world, where states originated from Zhou coexisted with former local entities, sometimes referred to in texts as Dong Yi, or „Eastern Barbarians". This small state, which was later considered the main – or even almost the only – surviving descendant of the legendary Xia Dynasty, is alternatively referred to in the Zuo Tradition as belonging either to the Xia or to the Eastern Yi. By analysing these records, I will attempt to show how this classification resulted from the complex interplay of the specific political situation and political goals of Qi's neighbours – mainly the state of Lu -, overlords dominating the Zhou world, especially the state of Jin, and their sometimes very personal ties to Qi.

**Keywords:** Eastern Zhou, Xia, Dong Yi, Spring and Autumn Annals, Zuo Tradition, cultural identity

[325] Stephen Roddy (University of San Francisco) and Yuqing Liu (University of Edinburgh). *Between Land and Sea: (Un)Taming Littoral Margins in Imperial China.*

**Abstract.** This panel explores how China's coastal waters and waterborne communities have participated in the making of cultural identities from medieval times through the nineteenth century. Coastal regions, now central to China's development, were largely regarded as peripheral in both geographical and cultural terms during the imperial era. At once threatening and alluring, these spaces provoked anxiety as well as imaginative possibility. Departing from binary views that privilege either land or sea, we explore the ways in which texts from imperial China engage with the dynamic interplay between the familiar and the strange, attraction and aversion, pleasure and peril, at the fluid margins where terrestrial and aquatic worlds meet and mingle.

Spanning nearly a millennium, this panel's three papers stage a conversation around a set of interrelated questions: How was littoral life conceptualized in textual and visual forms? How did such articulations uphold, unsettle, or

negotiate with the dominant cultural order? From medieval gourmands savoring exotic flavors of the sea, to late imperial officials wary of the boat-dwelling Danmin fisherfolk, to late Qing literary and visual imagery of the transgressive saltwater girl figure, this panel uncovers diverse visions of the coastal world. These investigations suggest that littoral margins and waterborne forms of life were more than geographic settings; they functioned instead as conceptual frameworks for understanding cultural transformation, social boundary-making, and literary innovation.
**Keywords:** coastal waters, cultural contact, waterborne communities, literary imagination

**Stephen Roddy (University of San Francisco)** – *Writing on Littoral Margins: Danmin in Qing Poetry and Prose*
This paper explores Qing era literary representations of the ethno-vocational category of fisherfolk called Danmin 蜑民 or Danjia 蜑家, sometimes referred to as "people on the water" (Shuishangren). Scattered across communities along the coastlines of Guangdong, Fujian, Guangxi, and elsewhere, their origins were obscure, and subject to considerable speculation and mythologizing. Admired for their aquatic skills and for their roles in filling various significant economic niches, but distrusted for allegedly slippery allegiances, including collusion with pirates and Macanese or foreigners, these factors along with their geographical indeterminacy inspired ambivalence that was reflected in both narrative accounts and lyric verse. They were also often compared, typically unfavorably, with other similarly marginalized groups such as the She 畲族, whose semi-nomadic slash-and-burn farming was perceived as less threatening or disruptive than the potentially subversive networks of the waterborne Danmin. This unsympathetic treatment contrasts with the legacy of romanticizing and empathizing with water-dwelling laborers in genres such as "oar songs" and "lotus-picking songs," from Lu Ji's Zhaoge xing (ca. 300) to Wang Changling's Cailianqu (ca. 750), to Zhu Yizun's Yuanyanghu zhaoge (ca. 1674) and beyond. By tracing the broad contours of literati-composed literature about Danmin, I hope to demonstrate how the littoral margins of the Qing empire inspired new directions for writing about watery landscapes that reflected the appearance of previously unfamiliar foreign traders, improvements in seafaring, overall economic diversification, and changing demography.
**Yuqing Liu (University of Edinburgh)** – *Transgressive Bodies: Saltwater Girls in Nineteenth-Century Sinitic Verse and Visual Culture*
Saltwater girls (xianshui mei) were a type of prostitute active in the coastal regions of southern China during the late imperial period. Commonly stigmatized in Chinese society for serving exclusively foreign clients, they also acted as key intermediaries in early Sino-European encounters. Around the mid-nineteenth century, these women were increasingly featured in literary and visual representations, often marked by their unbound feet, unconventional hygienic practices, and penetrating singing voices. This paper traces the depictions of saltwater girls across the waterways of Hong Kong, Macao, Canton, Shanghai, Hankou, and Singapore in Sinitic verse and visual works. I argue that the image of the saltwater girl is a multilayered construct shaped by traditional narratives of boat women, anxieties over racial boundaries, contested knowledges of sexual hygiene, and the shifting tides of Sino-European relations. Unlike high-class courtesans who migrated from the surrounding Jiangnan region to Shanghai, many saltwater girls traveled with their clients from the Pearl River Delta to the Yangtze River Delta. Some moved further inland with the expansion of the treaty-port system, while others sailed to Southeast Asia via maritime routes. Their mobility and fluid identities unsettled established norms of prostitution, calling for an analytic shift away from terrestrial and Shanghai-centered perspective. This paper thus repositions these women within transnational hydrogeographic currents to examine how sexual, racial, and national discourses were entangled in the making of modern Chinese womanhood.

[328] Anders Sydskjør (University of Zürich) and Chunxiao Liu (University of Zürich). *Sound & Vision: Adventures in the Epistemology of Mozi "Minggui" 墨子·明鬼.*
**Abstract.** "Minggui" has been at the centre of discussions of the Mozi's epistemology because of its affinity with the three models (三法/表) espoused in "Feiming." But the text's epistemological asides cannot be treated in isolation from the text's procedure. "Minggui" aims to persuade its addressees that there are ghosts and spirits that punish and reward correctly in four sections. This talk shows how the narrative and phonosemantic strategies are tailored to the goals of each section, ultimately supporting the central thesis.
The first section provides an example; it asserts that whether anyone has seen (見) or heard 聞) something is a model (法) for determining whether there is (有) or isn't (無) something. The section presents four stories of rulers punished by ghosts, and one of a ruler rewarded by a spirit. The stories' forms repeat in broad outline, each is framed by a narrative of transmission, and, in line with the model, they are rich in visual and auditive detail. In an early oral/manuscript culture, repetitions would have functioned semantically and phonetically, imposing an

overarching structure but allow specifics to stand out: the spirit name 句芒 [OC *kˁ(r)o-s+mˁaŋ], for instance, features a 反切 spelling of 茂 [*mˁ(r)o-s], the blessing they bestow upon the ruler. Showing how these different kinds of elements are tied together clarifies and elaborates the text's skeletal epistemological statements.
**Keywords:** Mozi, Epistemology, Argumentation, Narrative, Phonosemantics

[330] Yan Jia (Independent Scholar). *"You are not a (cross-dressing) opera performer!" and "Who doesn't yearn for beauty?": Negotiating compressed masculinities through Hanfu .*
**Abstract.** Hanfu (lit. Han clothing) revival is a vibrant, youth-driven cultural and fashion phenomenon in contemporary China. While existing research (Jia & Smelik, 2024; Jiang, 2025) primarily examines how Hanfu shapes performances of Chinese femininity, as most participants are women, it raises a tricky but important question: how is masculinity constructed within this predominantly female space, even if male participants are relatively few? Drawing on the ethnographic fieldwork of self-defined Hanfu fans in Beijing, China, this study highlights three modes of masculine construction: traditional "Wen-Wu" (cultural attainment-martial prowess) ideals, and elastic masculinity with feminine, that fall outside Wen-Wu imageries. This research adopts the concepts of dress as a situated bodily practice (Entwistle, 2023) and compressed modernity (Chang, 2022) to present how contemporary young Chinese navigate and reconcile competing expectations from traditional patriarchal ideals, nationalist symbolism, and global neoliberal self-branding through their practice of dressing up in Hanfu. Therefore, it illustrates compressed modernity as it is enacted at the bodily level.
**Keywords:** Hanfu, masculinity, compressed modernity, young Chinese, dress

[331] Taru Salmenkari (University of Helsinki). *How to make a climate consensus in China? An analysis of civil society participation in climate discussions .*
**Abstract.** My paper uses Pierre Boudieu's field analysis to examine whose voices are included in Chinese climate policy making. It is based on anthropological study on forums and meetings where Chinese climate consensus is being forged. Ever since Xi Jinping's 2021 pledge, tackling climate change has been a central policy target in China. Climate is a suitable arena to study how Chinese policy making integrates experimentation and consultation in the process. Climate change is a notoriously complex policy area as human knowledge about future developments and full impacts of mitigation measures in complex systems involve great uncertainty. As political process alone is not able to solve the climate crisis, both international climate governance and China's domestic climate governance include scientists, civil society, and the private sector in the process. This study observes Chinese civil society participation in climate policy process through civil society (co-)organized climate forums and other types of multi-stakeholder meetings to build common understanding about the problem and possible solutions. In this study, civil society includes NGOs, business associations, think tanks, and research institutes. It covers the fields of the state, business, NGOs, and the academe. The paper tracks pluralistic voices, synergies, and consensus building techniques that create a specific climate field among the participants who nevertheless express concerns specific to their own social fields. Among other things, multi-stakeholder participation explains how China is able to move so fast with technological innovation and how its policies integrate climate, biodiversity and social concerns.
**Keywords:** climate change, civil society, multi-stakeholder governance

[338] Luisa Schiffmann (University of Würzburg). *'Returning Home with Dignity': Discourses on the Return of Chinese Cultural Artefacts from the British Museum.*
**Abstract.** In the summer of 2023, two young Chinese vloggers uploaded a self-produced micro short series titled "Escape from the British Museum" on several video sharing platforms. The series follows the story of a Chinese jade teapot exhibited in the British Museum, which transforms into a human girl striving to return to China. Soon after its release, the mini drama sparked a vibrant discussion on social media about whether Chinese cultural artefacts held by museums abroad should be returned to China. Voices calling for the repatriation of the British Museum's Chinese collections echo worldwide debates on restitution. In the Chinese context, these discourses are interwoven with influential narratives on national heritage fostered by the Chinese government. By recasting cultural objects as prestigious symbols of the Chinese civilization and delegating them a special role in promoting nationalistic sentiment, the party-state has framed the retrieval of Chinese cultural artefacts abroad as an issue of utmost importance. However, virulent discussions in popular culture and online spaces suggest that the question of whether or how Chinese artefacts should be retrieved is constantly renegotiated by a wider Chinese public. In this paper, I seek to understand how an increasingly informed, travelling and consumerist Chinese middle class makes sense of narratives regarding the Chinese collection in the British Museum. Drawing on government

statements, media reports, social media discussions and my own fieldwork trip to the British Museum in October 2025, I explore how different levels of discourses on restitution are endorsed, contested or readapted on the ground.
**Keywords:** restitution, discourse, museum, heritage, nationalism

[339] Hanyu Jiang (Technical University of Berlin). *Chinese women in Hanfu:Reconstructing the National Memory and Alternative Modernity.*
**Abstract.** "What should Chinese women wear?"This question, posed by Antonia Finnane (1996) at the close of the twentieth century, framed clothing as a national concern. This research reflects that question through an examination of the Hanfu revival movement—a grassroots cultural phenomenon that has emerged over the past two decades, dedicated to reviving traditional Chinese clothing known as Hanfu. I situate this movement within the framework of modernity and nation-state narratives, interpreting it as a practice of alternative modernity undertaken by the younger generation in response to identity crises triggered by globalization and Western cultural influence. The movement embodies both an aspiration to reconstruct "Chineseness" and a desire to reconnect with historical and cultural heritage, with young urban Chinese women emerging as its primary participants, exhibitors, and promoters.
This study builds upon the scholarly tradition that positions women as "bearers and wearers" of tradition in the history of nation-states.Drawing on an analysis of the activities of the Hanfu Association of Berlin and a series of in-depth interviews with its members, I argue that the act of wearing Hanfu enables young Chinese women to articulate their national and gender identities through an imagined vision of non-Western modernity, offering an alternative narrative of cultural representation in a globalized world.I also note that for young Chinese women studying abroad, the agency they displayed combines individual and national meanings, simultaneously reinforcing and reinterpreting national narratives,which may be used as an empowering discourse that allows them to develop a new gender subjectivity.
**Keywords:** Cultural nationalism, Hanfu movement, Alternative modernity, Oversea Chinese

[343] Shu Fung Leung (The Chinese University of Hong Kong). *An Iconographic Analysis of the "Two Birds beneath a Tree" Motif on Tang Changsha Ceramics: Cultural Exchanges and Transformations in Relation to West Asian Artistic Traditions.*
**Abstract.** An Iconographic Analysis of the "Two Birds beneath a Tree" Motif on Tang Changsha Ceramics: Cultural Exchanges and Transformations in Relation to West Asian Artistic Traditions
Recent archaeological discoveries of Tang-dynasty Changsha ware ewers have revealed a series of decorative motifs featuring "Two birds Beneath a Tree." These ewers, dated to the ninth century, represent one of the few groups of Changsha ceramics that incorporate Central Asian cultural elements in their depictions of flora and fauna. Scholarly attention to these images has been limited, and existing studies have largely remained at the level of iconographic identification without systematic classification or interpretation.
Drawing upon excavated specimens and published archaeological catalogues, this paper organizes and compares the compositions and symbolic imagery of the "Two Birds Beneath a Tree" motif, identifying four structural categories and twenty variants that elucidate its formal, compositional, and symbolic variations. Furthermore, by examining the religious and symbolic traditions embedded in the representations of plants and birds, the study explores how this motif functioned as a site of interaction among natural imagery, human belief systems, and cross-regional cultural exchange. It also reveals how ecological conditions and local cultural contexts jointly shaped the processes of localization and reinterpretation within the Changsha ceramic tradition.
**Keywords:** Tang Changsha ware, Two Birds beneath a Tree, Iconographic analysis, Cross-cultural exchange, Plant culture

[344] Huiju Shen (Graduate Institute of Transdisciplinary Performing Arts, National Taiwan University of Arts), Pei-Hsun Wu Wu (National Chin-Yi University of Technology), Yi-Feng Chiu (Ling Tung University)), Yi-Jo Hung (National Taiwan University of Arts), Chia-Lian Lee (Tunghai University) and Chen-Lin Kao (Tunghai University). *Vocal Style, Text, and Supernatural Narratives: Artistic Transformation and Cultural Implications in Qing Dynasty and Taiwanese Opera.*
**Abstract.** This research group aims to deeply explore the multiple intersections and transformations of Qing Dynasty and Taiwanese regional xiqu in terms of artistic form, textual variation, and social culture. The artistic exploration focuses on the vocal characteristics, notation symbols, and ritual connotations within xiqu

performance. It also investigates changes in the textual adaptation of folk xiqu, observing the phenomenon where plots deviate from original sources by incorporating supernatural (gods and ghosts) segments, reflecting the audience's pursuit of entertainment effects.
Regarding cultural implications, the focus is on the construction of supernatural roles (gods, immortals, ghosts, spirits) and their belief meanings in xiqu. Through analysis of Qing Dynasty chuanqi and zizixi (excerpt plays), the study examines the unique venues for communication between the divine and the human. Furthermore, it explores how female writers in the Qing Dynasty utilized immortal-world writings and mythological metaphors to subtly criticize contemporary social issues and convey national imaginings, demonstrating women's xiqu creation and their concern for current affairs.
**Keywords:** Xiqu Vocal Artistry, Textual Adaptation, Supernatural Narrative, Ritual, Mythological Metaphor

**Pei-Hsun Wu (National Chin-Yi University of Technology)** – *The Notational Symbols and Deities' Vocal Style in the Qing Court New Year Celebration Theater: Xi chao Wu wei Sui Fa Si shi*
This article investigates the performative artistic essence of the play Xic hao Wu wei Sui Fa Si shi through the lenses of ritual, manuscript, and vocal style. The Qing dynasty court possessed a rich repertoire of New Year celebration plays, and Xi chao Wu wei Sui Fa Sishi often served as the very first production staged in the palace, carrying political, artistic, folkloric, ritualistic, and cosmological meanings related to the Five Phases, Yin and Yang, and the Eight Trigrams. This study focuses specifically on the "Zongben Dai Qupu" (總本代曲譜) manuscript type. Through an examination of its notation symbols and transcribed records, the article investigates the surge of arranging musical scores for Xi chao Wu wei Sui Fa Si shi during the fifth year of the Guangxu reign, particularly its unique experience of being adapted from the Yiqiang (弋腔) vocal style to the Kunqiang (崑腔) vocal style. The study aims to demonstrate the correspondence between Kun-Yi notation symbols and the Qing court musical scores, and to analyze the resulting vocal art and cultural significance derived from its performance in ritual contexts.
**Yi-Feng Chiu (Ling Tung University)** – *Ghostly figures adapted from the Qing Dynasty novel *Shuo Tang* for theatrical performances—Taking the plot of *Hong Ni Guan* in Beiguan Opera, Gezai Opera, and puppet show as examples*
The play * Hong Ni Guan*, originating from the Qing Dynasty novel *The Complete Story of the Tang Dynasty*, is a Peking Opera work. Taiwanese versions of * Hong Ni Guan * exist in Beiguan Opera, Taiwamese Opera, and puppet shows. While all versions tell the story of the Wagang heroes' attack on Hong Ni Guan during the Sui and Tang Dynasties, they incorporate ghostly appearances, significantly altering the original text. During the transmission and performance of traditional operas, folk elements are often incorporated, both to enhance entertainment and to reflect social customs. From *The Story of the Tang Dynasty* to *The Heroes of Wagang*, the focus is largely on historical recounting, while Taiwanese versions feature ghostly appearances. This difference in performance style and audience appeal warrants further exploration of the motivations behind these adaptations. This article examines the original Qing Dynasty novel, adapted from the book to the stage, from text to performance, highlighting not only the differences in audience preferences but also the connections to social culture.
**Yi-Jo Hung (National Taiwan University of Arts)** – *Narratives about deities in Taiwanese opera and their significance in faith*
The creation and performance of traditional Chinese opera are closely related to rituals, beliefs, and religious culture. Since the Yuan and Ming dynasties, genres such as "deity and Taoist drama" or "religious drama" have emerged. Taiwanese Waitai opera, often performed as offerings to deities, has seen "deity dramas"—narratives centered on gods—gradually become a popular genre, showcasing a folk belief consciousness and popular aesthetic distinct from zaju (variety plays) and chuanqi (legendary plays). This article focuses on the cultural role of Waitai deity dramas in Taiwanese folk beliefs and local society. First, it traces the historical development of deity dramas into a mainstream genre within Taiwanese opera; second, it analyzes how Taiwanese opera, through its stage number system and improvisational performance mechanisms, constructs contemporary deity images and religious connotations; finally, it observes the interaction between deity dramas and local beliefs, exploring their cultural significance in religious dissemination.
**Hui-ju Shen (National Taiwan University of Arts)** – *The Field of Interaction among Humans, Immortals, Ghosts, and Spirits: A Study of the Imagination and Construction of the Secular Society and the Supernatural World in the Qing Dynasty Legend Duxing Xian*
Duxing Xian recounts the story of two earth immortals, Kong Qiran and Li Changzai, who, after learning the Arts of the Bedchamber (fangzhong shu), leave their master to roam the human world for several centuries. On Earth, they interact with various men, women, ghosts, deities, and spirits, primarily to assist them in resolving their troubles

concerning sexual desire. This study focuses on the itinerant paths and modes of conduct of the two earth immortal protagonists, analyzing how they act as "mediators" to maneuver among different life forms while handling a series of public cases revolving around desire, life and death, and reincarnation. The research finds that the supernatural world in Duxing Xian is not a simple binary opposition, but a highly secularized and eroticized space of fusion. Using Daoist Arts of the Bedchamber as a means, the two immortals integrate the resolution of desire with the pursuit of Daoist transcendence, reflecting the mid-Qing society's leniency towards life's primal instincts and the secular penetration of immortal beliefs.

**Chia-lian Lee (Tunghai University)** – *Objects, Space, and Performance :Temple-Scene Excerpts in Zhui bai qiu*

As a distinctive site mediating communication between gods and humans and negotiating the sacred and the secular, the temple space carries an aura of religious mystery while also functioning, in the Ming–Qing period, as an open public venue and a locus of communal gathering. It is therefore a narrative setting that appears frequently in Chinese drama. Zhui bai qiu, a compilation reflecting the actual Kunqu repertoire performed during the Qianlong reign, includes numerous excerpts set in temples. These pieces employ scenic arrangements and stage properties in conjunction with actors' performance to construct richly textured stage worlds. For example, Sifan ("Longing for the Mortal World") uses images of arhats to evoke fantasies of desire; Sao Qin ("Sweeping Away Qin") dramatizes the manifestation of Kṣitigarbha to reveal moral distinctions between good and evil; Shui man ("Flooding the Monastery") mobilizes the monk's staff, meditation cushion, kasaya, and alms bowl as symbolic devices that stage the tug-of-war between Buddhist and demonic forces, reason and emotion; and Yang gao ("Petition to the Netherworld") utilizes sculpted figures of gods and ghosts to articulate grievances. Through the close integration of objects, spatial configuration, and embodied performance, these temple scenes reveal the diverse dimensions and cultural meanings embedded in theatrical representations of sacred space.

**Chenlin Kao (Tunghai University)** – *Mythological Metaphors, Social Realism, and National Imagination in Liu Qingyun's Plays*

Liu Qingyun, a female playwright of the Qing Dynasty, is the female playwright who left behind the most dramatic works in literary history. Her twelve plays not only make her the most prolific female playwright in literary history, but also demonstrate that ancient women's dramatic creation was not merely experimental, but a highly creative endeavor capable of constructing a complete personal narrative framework. She lived in the late Qing Dynasty, a period of dramatic social change. Many of her plays frequently feature fantastical plots and descriptions of the celestial realm, imbuing them with mythological elements. While deities, the celestial realm, and fantastical elements are not uncommon in drama, Liu Qingyun's purpose was not to reinforce religious beliefs. Instead, through the contrasting structural design of the celestial realm and the real world, she skillfully expressed a critique of social problems, or a compensation for genuine emotions in the contemporary world. This article will analyze Liu Qingyun's depictions of the celestial realm, mythological metaphors, and the social concerns and national imagination expressed by the author in her dramatic works. Simultaneously, this article will also explore how women's dramatic creation responded to changes in the world situation and thus paid attention to current affairs and politics.

[345] Mario De Grandis (Ca' Foscari), Jing Qiu (Jinan University), Christopher Peacock (East Asian Studies, Dickinson College), Hai Peng (University of Pittsburgh), Mark Bender (The Ohio State University), Haibin Zhang (Minzu University) and Jiaying Liu (Southwest Minzu University), Francesca Rosati (Leiden University) and Emily Wilcox (William & Mary). *Folk Literatures and the Imagination of Unity in Diversity in Modern China.*

**Abstract.** China has long framed itself as a multiethnic nation: during the Republican era, it recognised five 'races,' and under the PRC, it comprises 56 officially recognised minzu. Folk literature plays a central role in sustaining this vision: myths of origin, epic traditions, and tales of interethnic encounters are collected, canonised, and circulated as national heritage. At the same time, these narratives persist in local communities, transmitted orally and reshaped through everyday practice. Folklore thus reveals the dual nature of modern Chinese nationhood: the discourse of "unity in diversity" affirms ethnic specificity while simultaneously integrating it within a singular national framework. The panel opens with two papers investigating the field at large: one examines the political and epistemological debates behind modern folk-literature anthologies, while the other traces the adaptation of folk genres for socialist purposes. Subsequent papers explore specific cases of adaptation and reappropriation: the refutation of a Tibetan origin myth in favour of a scientifically informed narrative in Döndrup Gyel's work, and the transformation of the Mongolian militiaman Gada Meiren from "bandit" to ethnic hero. The fourth and fifth papers consider two sides of the same process in Nuosu Yi folk texts: their textualisation for national and international

dissemination, and the continuing use of oral traditions in contemporary performance. Also centred on lived practice, the final paper analyses a women's Sufi shrine whose authority derives from a visionary dream of legendary Hui forefather Waqqas. The panel concludes with remarks by the discussant.
**Keywords:** folk literature, ethnic literature, oral traditions, textualisation, Chinese myths, Chinese epics, Chinese legends, Chinese fairy tales

**Mario De Grandis (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)** – *Collecting the Nation: Epistemological Debates and Disciplinary Aspirations in PRC Folk Literature Compilations*
Western scholarship has often neglected the large-scale folk literary anthologies compiled during the PRC, viewing them primarily as instruments of state ideology and nation-building. Indeed, a close reading of theoretical writings and editorial practices by three central figures in the formation of modern Chinese literary folklore —Zhong Jingwen, Jia Zhi, and Ma Xueliang—confirms their explicit endorsement of orthodox political discourses. Yet this paper argues that such a view, while not inaccurate, is incomplete. Beneath the surface of official rhetoric lies a sustained effort by these scholars to carve out folk literature as an independent, scientifically grounded field of inquiry. Examining the epistemological debates surrounding both the collection of oral materials and the editing of textual ones reveals internal frictions between more rigidly orthodox contributors and scholars committed to disciplinary rigor. These discussions, which draw extensively on Chinese intellectual traditions as well as key Western theories, demonstrate that editors were not merely passive executors of Party directives but sophisticated thinkers negotiating competing demands. The paper thus challenges prevailing biases against PRC folk literature anthologies and highlights the complex interplay between political imperatives and knowledge production—particularly the unexamined role of minzu classification as a foundational but implicit framework guiding the field.
**Jing Qiu (Jinan University)** – *Adaptation and Reconstruction of 1950s Ethnic Minority Folk Literature in southwest China*
In the field of Chinese ethnic literature (minzu wenxue), the works of minority writers have long been grounded in folk traditions. In the 1950s—the formative decade for modern ethnic literature in southwest China—the first generation of minority authors produced a remarkable body of writing, especially narrative poetry (xushishi). Their works drew deeply on folk sources through adoption, adaptation, and creative transformation, while also intersecting with broader cultural and political initiatives: the construction of a new socialist ethnic literature, the nationwide collection and collation of folk materials, and the launch of the "New Folk Song Movement." Importantly, many minority writers themselves participated in the collection and editing of folk literature, contributing to projects such as the Zhuang epic Bainiao Yi and the Miao epic Arong and Luogang. Their involvement enabled them to rework these materials into a substantial corpus of new narrative poetry, reshaping folk traditions within modern literary frameworks. By tracing the processes that shaped the emergence of this renewed genre, the paper engages the longstanding debate over the boundaries between ethnic minority folk literature and the creative writing of minority authors—a central issue in PRC literary scholarship. Through textual analysis, the paper argues that the persistent mobilization of traditional folk themes in these "literary works" represents not simply inheritance but a systematic adaptation and reconstruction of folk resources under state-guided national discourse.
**Christopher Peacock (Dickinson College)** – *Myth and Modernity: Tibetan Identity and Scientistic Discourse in the Writing of Döndrup Gyel*
Döndrup Gyel (1953-1985) is the most celebrated writer of modern Tibet, renowned for his fiction, poetry, scholarship, and a body of essays, both analytical and lyrical, that form a significant part of his six-volume collected works. In his influential essay "The Origin of the Tibetan Race and the Term 'Tibet'," Döndrup Gyel begins by invoking the creation myth of the Tibetan people, namely that they were descended from a union between the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (incarnated as a monkey) and a rock ogress. The myth is a cornerstone of Tibetan identity, a tale that evokes indigenous legend while binding it to Tibet's dominant Buddhist identity. But far from taking pride in this myth of origin, the writer dismisses it in favor of a "scientific" explanation of how humans evolved from apes. What can a brief essay from 1982 reiterating the basics of Darwinian evolution tell us about the relationship between Tibetan and Chinese literary modernity, and, more broadly, what does it say about the tensions inherent in the forced inclusion of Tibetans into the unitary national framework of the People's Republic? Taking Döndrup Gyel's essay as a starting point, I argue that his embrace of scientism over myth encapsulates the dominant direction of modern Tibetan literary and intellectual discourse—a struggle between iconoclastic modernization and the imperative to forge a distinctive cultural identity within the PRC.
**Hai Peng (University of Pittsburgh)** – *Between Bandit and Hero: The Missing Manchukuo Years of the Gada Meiren Epic*

This paper investigates the transformation of Gada Meiren [Mongolian: ɣada meyiren, Гаадаа мэйрэн], a Mongol militiaman who resisted Chinese settler colonial expansion in eastern Inner Mongolia between 1929 and 1931, into one of modern China's most iconic ethnic heroes. Gada Meiren's legend has circulated across decades of visual, musical, and literary production, from revolutionary ballads to a 2008 MTV adaptation performed by Madame Xi (Peng Liyuan), China's current First Lady. These reinventions reveal how his image has served as a barometer of China's shifting relationship with its multiethnic frontier. The central aim of this paper is to recover the missing Manchukuo years (1932–1945) in the making of the Gada Meiren epic. While post-1949 reinterpretations have been well documented, the period when his story was appropriated by Mongol activists and Japanese propagandists under Manchukuo's ideology of "five-race concordia" (wuzu xiehe) remains virtually unexamined. This research argues that the transformation of Gada Meiren from a vilified "bandit" into a hero of ethnic sovereignty first occurred within Manchukuo's cultural and political sphere—an insight that redefines how we understand the genealogy of China's ethnic hero narratives.

**Mark Bender (The Ohio State University)** – *Calling Back" the Yi Hero Zhyge Alu: Cultural Power and Epic in South West China*

Chinese researchers have identified several major epic traditions from Tibetan, Mongol, and Kirghiz groups in the north and west (Gesar, Jangar, Manas), and more recently from southern groups such as the Zhuang and Miao (Buluotuo and King Yalu). These epics, represented through diverse media, have served local, regional, and national agendas tied to ethnic cultural production and, in recent years, to the state-promoted ideal of "unity in diversity." As cultural capital, epics play a key role in the competition for state-backed heritage funding. Nuosu Yi poet Aku Wuwu's signature poem Calling Back the Soul of Zhyge Alu (a lu yyr kut) invokes revitalization of the Yi people in southwest China. The poem concerns Zhyge Alu, a hybrid of human and dragon-eagle lineage who rescues life on earth from solar catastrophe. The core narrative circulates orally among Yi subgroups, and print versions have appeared in the numerous publications since the 1950s. This paper examines how epic traditions from southwest China—particularly Zhyge Alu—have been mobilized across print, public art, digital media, and performance, with brief comparisons to Mesoamerican and Finnish epic traditions. A key focus is contemporary efforts by scholars, cultural workers, and local communities to construct a "master-text" version of Zhyge Alu, positioning it alongside China's officially recognized "great epics" and revealing the dynamics of cultural power embedded in this process.

**Haibin Zhang (Minzu University of China) and Jiaying Liu (Southwest Minzu University)** – *Voice of Soul-Calling: Nuosu Yi Contemporary Expressivity through Poem, Music and Healing*

This paper examines how Nuosu Yi contemporary poets and popular music artists from Southwest China use a ritually powerful chanted soul-calling register known as yyrkut (ꆹꀋ) in their literary and musical practices. Traditionally performed by ritual specialists for healing and protection, yyrkut invites lay participants to join in vocalizing and producing collective resonance. This convergence emphasizes the creative force of voice and prosody in renewing relationships with nonhuman or semi-human—ancestors, spirits of the dead, and nature beings. In contemporary contexts, the (re)calling of the soul through poetic and musical expression extends beyond an emblem of ethnic identity. It evokes histories of ancestral migration, episodes of conflict, and lived experiences of integration, mobility, and uncertainty. Drawing on discursive analyses of recent Nuosu poems and songs, this paper explores how creative uses of yyrkut vernacular forms become objects of their own perceived power, articulating aspirations for trans-peripheral belonging in a time of social and cultural flux. The evocative power of soul-calling holds dual significance. First, it illuminates how voice and narrative intertwine to express Nuosu historical imagination and affective landscapes. Second, it challenges us to rethink identity as something enacted across and beyond ethnic boundaries, where sound and ritual memory continue to mediate connections between people, place, and the more-than-human world.

**Francesca Rosati (Leiden University)** – *Legends of Waqqāṣ and Hui Lineages: Women, Sacred Genealogies, and Authority in Popular Sufism*

Hui Muslim communities in China often trace their origins to legendary "forefathers" linked to the Prophet Muhammad. Among these forefathers, the figure of Waqqāṣ stands out. His purported journeys from the Middle East to China serve as a foundational figure anchoring Hui identity in a sacred, transregional past that links local histories to the broader Islamic world. This paper explores how Waqqāṣ' legend is mobilised, reinterpreted, and contested in contemporary popular Sufism of northwestern China, a region where Sufi narratives and practices flourished long before state heritagisation and folklorisation. While the state appropriates Waqqāṣ' legend as an emblem of cultural diversity, incorporating it into official narratives of a harmonious, multiethnic China, popular Sufi traditions draw upon the purported site of Waqqāṣ' burial in Guangzhou to affirm devotional authority and spiritual lineage, extending beyond mere folkloric representation. Based on ethnographic research at a Sufi shrine

on the outskirts of Linxia (Gansu), this study examines how Muslim women—often marginalised both within Islamic hierarchies and state ethnic rhetoric—employ imaginative sacred genealogies linking Linxia to Guangzhou through the figure of Waqqāṣ. By foregrounding the political, social, and spiritual dimensions of these narratives, this paper argues that foundational stories in Chinese popular Sufism function less as static heritage and more as dynamic resources through which both state and local actors pursue competing visions of authority and Islamic identity.

[349] Chao Ying Lee (National Dong Hwa University). *Diplomatic Gifts from France to China in the Eighteenth Century: A Study of Porcelain Gifts from Sèvres in the Eighteenth Century.*

**Abstract.** This study examines the Sèvres porcelain diplomatic gifts that Henri Bertin (the French Minister of the Interior) delivered to China on four separate occasions during the eighteenth century and aims to expand on earlier research (Marie-Laure de Rochebrune, Les porcelains de Sèvres envoyés en guise de cadeaux diplomatiques à l'Empereur de Chine par les souverains français dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle). Drawing on documents and correspondence held at the Institut de France, archival records compiled by the Qing Imperial Household Department, and existing works of art preserved in palace collections on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, this study systematically examines Sèvres porcelain with respect to ware types, forms, decorative motifs, iconography, and production techniques. The analysis aims to reconstruct the historical context and underlying motivations behind these objects, while establishing a comprehensive catalog of French porcelain in the imperial collections of the National Palace Museums in Taipei and Beijing for the purpose of diplomatic gift research. This study further undertakes an in-depth investigation into four interrelated areas: the French porcelain holdings of both palace museums; the motivations and processes by which French porcelain was employed as instruments of diplomatic exchange; the iconographic analysis of works incorporating portraits of the Qianlong Emperor; and the neoclassical aesthetic, particularly its synthesis of French and Chinese classical visual traditions.

**Keywords:** Sino-French exchanges in the eighteenth century, Sèvres Porcelains, Henri Bertin, French East India Company

[352] Kevin Henry (Université de Mons) and Manon Hayette (Université de Mons). *Unbinding the Cangue: Computational Approaches to Eileen Chang's Style in French Translation.*

**Abstract.** Chinese writer Eileen Chang (張愛玲, 1920–1995) is renowned for her precise, ironically disenchanted prose, the strength of her narrative voice, and the depth of her symbolic imagery (Kam 2012; Lee 1999; Lin 2007; Zhang 2003). Unlike English, which has benefited from Chang's own self-translations, French relies entirely on a single external translator, raising the question of how fully her stylistic complexity has been conveyed to the French-speaking readership.

This paper shows how methodologies from the digital humanities and corpus stylistics can refine literary translation criticism. The study forms part of a broader project aimed at developing a new model for this purpose.

Our analysis focuses on Chang's novella 金鎖記 Jinsuo Ji (Chang 1943/2019), translated into French by Emmanuelle Péchenart (Chang 1999). Using a corpus of modern Chinese literature processed through the text-analysis platform SketchEngine (Kilgarriff & Rychlý 2003), we extract keywords and frequency lists from the source text to identify the lexical features that characterize Chang's style. These results provide criteria for evaluating the French translation and inform the selection of passages for detailed comparative analysis. The methodology builds on Lance Hewson's (2011) two-tier model for translation criticism, which we expand by integrating corpus-based lexical extraction into the "critical framework", following Mastropierro (2017).

This approach enables us to assess the extent to which the translator's "voice" (also embedded in Péchenart 2002; 2010) may influence or reshape the author's, affecting how a French-speaking readership unfamiliar with Chang's cultural context perceives her literary style.

**Keywords:** translation criticism, Eileen Chang, corpus stylistics, digital humanities, Chinese modern literature

[353] Federico Picerni (University of Bologna), Martina Benigni (La Sapienza University of Rome), Désirée Marianini (La Sapienza University of Rome) and Fabrizio Massini (University of Vienna). *Amateur Cultural Practices in China: Authors, the Establishment, the Market.*

**Abstract.** The various dimensions and dynamics of amateurism in China are attracting an increasing scholarly attention. Presently available scholarship investigated amateur practices as forms of intellectual and civic engagement (Veg 2019) as well as forms of artistic production in numerous fields including cinema (Jaffee 2006), poetry (Sun 2014; van Crevel 2017), internet literature (Hockx 2015), and theatre (Ferrari 2025). The heightened relevance that cultural practices by non-specialists have been given in China by cultural institutions and the editorial

market in the recent decade or so further complicates the issue of the relationship between amateur practices on the one hand and state power and capital on the other. This panel focuses on amateur cultural practices in present-day China by concentrating on the interrelations of the two forces that, together with the authors themselves, constitute this peculiar 'cultural mode of production'. These are the cultural establishment (i.e. state-affiliated institutions such as universities, journals, publishing houses, theatres) and the market (Hockx 2003). Drawing upon case studies from the fields of literature, cinema, and theatre, this panel aims to investigate amateur practices as both cultural and social phenomena. Our reflections are guided by questions including: what are the distinctive traits in the reception, circulation, and discussion of amateur practices? How do amateur authors navigate the space between the cultural establishment and the market? How do amateur artistic practices relate to state ideology and governmental policies? How is the relationship between symbolic and economic capital in amateur practices?

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**Keywords:** amateur, non-specialist, unofficial, grassroots, independent

**Martina Benigni (Sapienza University of Rome)** – *A Poetry Society, an Unofficial Poetry Journal, a Bar: A Preliminary Overview of Yehuo*

This presentation focuses on a case study within the field of amateur literary and cultural practices in contemporary Mainland China. The DIY tradition of unofficial poetry journals, derived from the underground activities at the end of the Cultural Revolution, remains alive and dynamic. New generations of poets (or poets-to-be), just like their predecessors, face challenges such as the need to carve out a space of one's own in the "literary field with Chinese Characteristics". Chen Tingfu 陈亭夫, a "post-2000s" poet, in September 2025 inaugurated the Wildfire Poetry Bar (Yehuo shige jiuba 野火诗歌酒吧) in Chengdu: "the Gen-Z White Nights Bar", he told me during an interview, referencing prominent poet Zhai Yongming's White Nights Bar (Baiye 白夜), a well-known cultural and artistic hub since 1998. Drawing upon semi-structured interviews and digital ethnography, this study explores how digital-native authors practice and circulate amateur literature via social media platforms (Weixin, Xiaohongshu, Douyin, Bilibili) to build community and voice themselves. Wildfire, before being an "offline" venue, is a poetry society (shishe 诗社) of around 300 members, recruiting (zhaoxin 招新) online, yet adopting paper-based unofficial poetry journals as expressive form. The aim is to examine how Gen-Z mediates between state institutions and the market, considering that the bar is also a place for selling their books and journals, "to print the next issue" and "survive", as Chen explained.

**Désirée Marianini (Sapienza University of Rome)** – *From Amateur to Author: Creative Documentary about Family and the Politics of Representation in China*

The production and circulation of creative documentaries in the People's Republic of China have undergone profound transformations over the past three decades. The advent of digital video (DV) technology in the late 1990s revolutionized Chinese independent cinema, enabling what Wang Yiman (2005) describes as the convergence of two seemingly opposite figures: the auteur and the amateur. This convergence, grounded not only in the accessibility of new technologies but also in shared independent and creative aspirations, reshaped both the aesthetics and the social function of documentary filmmaking. While early 2000s independent documentaries often focused on socially or geographically marginal subjects, contemporary practices increasingly engage with biographical and autobiographical narratives, frequently rooted in the family sphere. This presentation examines the media and workshop practices of Family Lens (Jiating yingxiangguan 家庭影像馆), curated by documentary filmmaker Gu Xue. After outlining the historical and social conditions of the archive's foundation, the discussion focuses on how amateur practices evolve when audiences become active participants, particularly through workshops on family documentary production. Operating within—and negotiating—the complex institutional and political landscape of contemporary China, the archive creates spaces of mediated intimacy and collective authorship that subtly challenge dominant discourses while remaining attentive to the limits of public expression. Drawing on Zhou Chenshu's (2021) notion of interface, the paper explores how encounters between screen and viewer generate processes of situated knowledge, selfreflection, and relational awareness.

**Fabrizio Massini (University of Vienna)** – *Inside/Outside of the System: Performance-making in 21st century China*
This paper examines the conceptual ambiguity surrounding "independent" performance makers in postmillennial China. Drawing on extensive interactions during my work as a theatre practitioner based in China (2009–2020) and on recent ethnographic fieldwork (2023–2025), I observed that performance makers express their independence from the mainstream through various terms including 'fringe' (边缘 bianyuan), 'grassroots' (民间 minjian), and 'independent' (独立 duli). However, the most prevalent terminology is the dyad 'outside-the-system' (体制外 tizhiwai) vs. 'within-the-system' (体制内 tizhinei)—a reference to the reforms that reshaped the state-owned arts system into a 'cultural industry' (文化产业 wenhua chanye) between the 1980s and the 2000s. That this dyad still functions as a primary identity marker four decades after its introduction signals a gap in the available scholarship, where it is often mentioned but never fully fleshed-out. For performance makers, the tizhinei/tizhiwai distinction appears to capture two distinct approaches, ethoses, and 'performance cultures as epistemic cultures' (Fischer-Lichte et. al.2024). The ever-shifting character of the performing arts' system, however, means that most practitioners operate neither fully within nor fully outside it, but in the indeterminate spaces between. Drawing on selected case studies, this paper deconstructs the tizhiwai/tizhinei dyad to illuminate the conditions of performance-making under postsocialism—understood both as a 'ruling technology of the postsocialist state in its management of popular culture' (Wang 2001) and a structure of feeling (Zhang 2007) that envelops performance makers, informing their artistic choices and identity-making.
**Federico Picerni (University of Bologna)** – *Social Narrative(s) in China's "Literature of the New Masses": Three Recent Cases of Amateur Authors*
While China's economic growth slows down, social contradictions pile up and urban youth is increasingly questioning societal expectations, the cultural and editorial field is witnessing a surge in non-specialist authors. In addition to 基层写作 (grassroots writing), the most frequent descriptor is 素人, which points to both untrained and grassroots. Overall, they are brought under the larger denomination of 新大众文艺 (new mass/popular literature and art), directly connected to Xi Jinping's 2014 speech to writers as well as to the Yan'an tradition. Recent books and authors that fall under these categories include Hu Anyan 胡安焉's bestselling 我在北京送快递 (I Deliver Parcels in Beijing, 2023), Hei Tao 黑桃's 我在上海开出租 (I Drive Taxis in Shanghai, 2024) and Li Wenli 李文丽's 我在北京做家政 (I'm a Domestic Worker in Beijing, 2025). The titles clearly have the same pattern, highlighting the authors' occupations and anticipating the social theme. With this presentation, employing analytical instruments from the sociology of culture and drawing on recent scholarship on the literary policy in the PRC under Xi, I investigate these three books as cases of grassroots writing, to examine the kind of social narrative produced in literary works actively promoted by the cultural establishment and the editorial market. In particular, I inquire whether and how authors negotiate a possible social critique from their truthful description of labour condition with the political mandate to promote 正能量 (positive energy).

[359] Ji Li (University of Hong Kong), Miao Feng (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) and Danni Cai (Hangzhou Normal University). *From Piety to Politics: Women's Literacy, Religion, and Subject Formation in Modern China.*

**Abstract.** This panel reframes the narrative of mass literacy in modern China by foregrounding women and the religious and quasi-religious institutions through which they engaged the written word. Moving beyond state-centered and secular narratives, it traces how distinct literacy practices—catechetical instruction, epistolary exchange, and worker education—functioned as technologies of ethical self-cultivation and political mobilization from the late Qing through the mid-twentieth century. Ji Li examines Catholic women in the late Qing who, through catechetical education and transnational correspondence, developed epistolary literacy that articulated pious identities and linked local communities to global religious networks. Miao Feng analyses the 1930s collaborations between the YWCA and left-wing intellectuals, showing how a Christian organization's worker education was radicalized, revising literacy curricula and art forms to cultivate a new consciousness of class and self-reliance among factory women. Danni Cai follows women educated in middle schools into the wartime public sphere, arguing that letter-writing practices honed in these settings enabled "letter-writing girls" to navigate social and institutional constraints and recast themselves as confident political subjects in the 1930s and 1940s. Taken together, the papers challenge secular and male-centered teleologies of modernization. They demonstrate that religious contexts (Catholic missions and the Christian social gospel) and devotional commitments (to God, class, and nation) were constitutive of female literacy and subject formation, creating new social selves and enabling women's unprecedented modes of civic and political participation in the spiritual and political revolutions of modern China.

**Keywords:** Literacy, Religion, Women

**Ji Li (University of Hong Kong)** – *Christian Virgins and Religious Literacy in Late Nineteenth-Century China*
This study examines the intertwined histories of gender, religion, and literacy in rural China in the late nineteenth century through a corpus of over eighty letters authored by Chinese Catholic women. The collection began with the discovery in Paris in 2004 of three 1871 letters addressed to a French priest; since then, materials from French and Chinese archives have been assembled, including correspondence from Christian virgins in Liaoning, lay Catholics in Shanxi, the Sisters of St. Josephine in Hebei, and the Sisters of the Holy Family in northeast China. Reading these letters as both devotional texts and social instruments, the paper asks how conversion and catechetical education fostered religious literacy, how women fashioned epistolary selves to negotiate authority and affect, and how grassroots writing linked villages to global Catholic networks at a time of low literacy. Methodologically, it combines textual analysis, attention to handwriting, and reconstruction of transnational ties across missionary circuits. The evidence reveals that epistolary practice enabled women to cross conventional boundaries of family, parish, and locality, articulate personal aspirations, and cultivate identities anchored in faith. It also demonstrates that religion was a significant, understudied driver in the expansion of mass literacy, with women learning to read and write through sacraments, catechisms, and correspondence. By situating these intimate writings within broader ecclesial and imperial geographies, the study opens a new window onto the emotional worlds and religious literacies of ordinary believers and reframes China's engagement with modernity from the perspective of its rural Catholic women.

**Miao Feng (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences)** – *YWCA and the Labor Education of Female Workers in Wartime and Revolutionary China*
In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) radicalized its industrial labor program in China, making worker-centered education a central tenet. Facing a shortage of teachers, YWCA organizers in Shanghai frequently recruited instructors for literacy, drama, and singing from the city's underground Chinese left-wing revolutionaries. At the time, these intellectuals were focused on raising mass consciousness through literature and the arts. This collaboration proved mutually transformative. The left-wing revolutionaries actively engaged with female factory workers, gathering feedback and creatively revising formerly elite-centric and catechetical educational forms. The resulting classes encouraged workers to sing, hear, act, and see their own experiences, fostering a sense of compassion and self-reliance. Conversely, the revolutionaries materialized and, to a certain extent, further radicalized the YWCA's original goal of nurturing self-reliance and autonomy among women workers. The YWCA night schools not only cultivated a generation of Chinese women labor activists but also produced revolutionary artworks and songs that spread widely during the mobilization for the anti-Japanese war. This research complicates the existing party-centric narrative of labor and women's education history by highlighting the significant, yet distinct, roles played by progressive forces like the YWCA and underground left-wing intellectuals in the social and cultural transformation of the twentieth-century Chinese revolution.

**Danni Cai (Hangzhou Normal University)** – *Female Literacy and Epistolary Practice in Modern China*
Epistolary knowledge has long been regarded as essential to all strata of Chinese society. The late Qing and Republican periods, in particular, witnessed explosive growth in guides to letter writing. Epistolary textbooks for women emerged from 1907 alongside the promotion of universal education, and facilitated the rise of female letter writers. These sources are largely unstudied. By analyzing a wide variety of historical sources, such as photos, autobiographies, personal collections, and letter-writing manuals, this paper argues that epistolary literacy was crucial for women to foster a consciousness of themselves as gendered subjects while elevating women's roles in broader sociopolitical communities in the modern world. Notably, sources suggest many female students assumed the task of writing letters for wounded soldiers during China's War of Resistance against Japan (1937–1945) and the Chinese Civil War (1945–1949). Most letter-writing girls showed their will to win the recognition of these underprivileged soldiers, which prompted these girls to overcome their fear of soldiers' bloody bodies, break dialect barriers, and tolerate soldiers' quick tempers. The acquisition of epistolary literacy, as a result, actively empowered these school girls and gave them confidence and courage in their ongoing endeavours to serve their country.

[362] Siwei Long (University of Sydney). *The Inhospitable Structure of Laughter: Performative Exclusion in Chinese Xiangsheng's Lunli-gen.*

**Abstract.** The exclusion of female performers from xiangsheng 相声(cross-talk) is often attributed to historical social barriers and audience expectations. This paper challenges this view, arguing that marginalisation is structurally embedded within the performance genre, creating an 'inhospitable structure' that presupposes masculine participation and textual exclusion. To demonstrate this, the analysis focuses on the category of lunli-

gen 伦理哏(ethical gags), revealing how the genre's comic mechanism is built on power asymmetry, mockery, and the textual prioritising of vulgar content, actively constituting a masculine-default performative space. This paper argues that content-based reforms failed because they only regulated what was delivered in performance, but not how humour fundamentally worked. Specifically, the analysis is based on performance transcripts and published texts drawn from the lunli-gen subset, employing a rhetorical analysis divided into two text groups: the first discusses anti-heroic narration, which naturalises humiliation as entertainment and sustains the exclusively masculine anti-hero persona; the second examines the technical mechanism of jiao baba 叫爸爸(call me father) gag, a linguistic device that exploits the generational hierarchy and filial piety to assert verbal domination. Ultimately, this paper reframes gender exclusion from a moral or sociological issue to a professional and performative one. By demonstrating how the mechanism that sustains xiangsheng's vitality while simultaneously delineates who can successfully embody it on stage, this paper offers a crucial model for understanding how vernacular art forms resist ideological transformation and defend gendered participation in public cultural life.
**Keywords:** Xiangsheng (Cross-Talk), Gender Exclusion, Performance Mechanics, Humour, Comic Structure, Vernacular Art

[365] Federica Ferlanti (Cardiff University). *Writing Lives, Writing History: Gender, Transnational Trajectories, and Biography in Twentieth-century Chinese History.*

**Abstract.** This double-panel showcases historical research on the transnational lives of women and men who have been neglected or erased from Chinese history. Li Zezhen, Arundel del Re, Wang Guoxiu, Guo Jingqiu, Deng Yuzhi, and Lu Cui all share a transnational upbringing and professional lives which cross multiple national and linguistic boundaries. We examine how their global outlooks informed their personal and professional choices, and address the following questions: why are these transnational lives significant and why have they been neglected? What do they add to our understanding of twentieth-century Chinese history and the role of individual agency in shaping it? In what ways was their gender connected to mechanisms of erasure in the international fields in which they were operating —journalism, academia, education, translation, diplomacy, and activism? To what extent did the transnational nature of their lives alongside the historical context —World War Two, postwar reconstruction, the Cold War, and the Cultural Revolution, contribute to their invisibility in the historical record and national histories? The volatile contexts in which they operated makes writing transnational lives particularly ambiguous and complex methodologically: we shall discuss the sources we can use for uncovering the trajectories of transnational-active actors and what problems attend these, the suitability of the biographical framework for the history we are currently writing alongside other approaches, and the potential pitfalls of doing global micro-historical research. Overall, the double-panel seeks to provide new insights and tools for writing the transnational lives of women and men in early twentieth-century Chinese history.
**Keywords:** Microhistory, Gender, Biography, Methodology

**Coraline Jortay (CNRS)** – *French Feminism Inside Out: Retracing Li Zezhen's (1903-1987) European Years Through the forgotten life and career of Li Zezhen 李澤珍 (1903-1987)*

This paper examines the extent to which little-known transnational biographical trajectories allow us to rethink the broader national movements within which they took place. A native of Jiujiang, Jiangxi, Li Zezhen was missionary-educated and graduated from the elite Ginling College like many women of her generation who went on to study in the UK or the US and led international careers. In an unusual move among her peers, Li left for France instead. Establishing contacts with French, Swiss, and Belgian feminists, she worked closely with prominent figures in the feminist movement such as Marguerite Thibert, Marie-Louise Puech, and Marie-Louise Bouglé. While in Paris, Li wrote for Chinese newspapers, went on lecture tours around Europe, interned at the League of Nations on behalf of the feminist press, and took on official duties for the federation of Chinese journalists in Europe. Meanwhile, her doctoral dissertation La Presse féministe en France de 1869 à 1914 (1935) made her one of the first historians of the French feminist press, and the first scholar to work from the newly founded feminist library in Paris. Ultimately, how does our understanding of the history of French feminism shift when recovering the forgotten life of a Chinese feminist who operated at its centre, albeit for a limited number of years (1930-1934)? And how do those years of intense intellectual exchange pave the way for further exchanges between French and Chinese women over the next decades?

**Federica Ferlanti (Cardiff University)** – *Academics Sans Frontières: Arundel del Re's Colonial Taiwan*

This presentation traces the peripatetic life of Prof. Arundel del Re (Florence 1892- Melbourne 1974), an eminent academic whose life story and intellectual commitment to academia and education in Taiwan and Japan has been

overlooked both in Europe and East Asia. Del Re lived in Florence until the age of 19 years old, when he moved to London to attend university. He graduated from University College in 1917 (BA Arts with Hons) and was appointed Lecturer in Italian at Oxford University in 1921. In 1927 he was offered of a professorship in English Literature at the University of Tokyo, which he accepted. This would turn out to be a major turning point in his life: del Re spent the next 27 years in Taiwan, which was part of the Japanese empire, and Japan, between the age of 35 and 62. He taught at Tokyo University until 1930 and then took up the position of Professor of English Literature at Taihoku Imperial University in Taiwan until 1943. Del Re and his family were transferred from Taihoku (modern day Taipei) to the civilian internment camp in Den'enchōfu in Tokyo in 1944 and released in September 1945. The presentation will use Del Re's experience in Taiwan to shed light on transnational cultural contacts and academic exchanges at a time when East Asia's quest for 'modernity' was informed by asymmetrical relations, competing nationalisms, and global conflicts.

**Ling-ling Lien (Academia Sinica)** – *History Writing as a Feminist Endeavor: The Life of Wang Guoxiu (1895-1971)*

This paper explores women's roles in modern China's knowledge production through the transnational life and scholarship of Wang Guoxiu (1895–1971), a pioneering historian and educator whose intellectual trajectory linked China, the United States, and Europe. Born in Kunshan, Jiangsu Province, Wang was educated at Shanghai's McTyeire School, a missionary institution that introduced her to liberal humanist ideals and Western pedagogical reform. In 1921, she received the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship and earned a master's degree in history from Columbia University, where she encountered emerging currents in women's history and progressive education. Upon returning to China, Wang taught at several universities and worked to reshape both historical content and method. Her monograph, A History of Women's Lives in Medieval England, was the first historical study written by a Chinese woman from a female-centered perspective, reflecting her engagement with transatlantic feminist historiography. By reinterpreting Western models of historical writing through the lens of Chinese intellectual needs, Wang transformed women's history from a moral and didactic genre into a comparative, analytic field. Equally innovative was her approach to teaching: she promoted active learning through visual aids and discussion-based methods, blending Western educational theories with the evolving university system in Republican China. Wang's career exemplifies how early twentieth-century Chinese women intellectuals used transnational experiences to redefine history writing as a feminist and globally connected enterprise.

**Helena Lopes (Cardiff University)** – *Paradoxes of Visibility: Tracing Guo Jingqiu's Global Life*

This presentation focuses on Guo Jingqiu 郭鏡秋 (also known as Helena Kuo), a Chinese woman who led an extraordinary global life, highly visible in the 1930s and 1940s but subsequently absent from histories of gender, migration, and journalism in China and beyond. This Macau-born, Guangzhou-, Nanjing- and Shanghai-educated woman had a stellar, albeit forgotten, career as a journalist, writer and public speaker in China, Britain, France and the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. In her articles, novels and autobiographies, Guo Jingqiu presented China and the significance of its wartime resistance to global audiences through intimate narratives of her personal journey of education, work, travel, and interaction with a range of multinational actors. Her Second World War activities were followed by a less prominent, but equally global, postwar career as translator, interpreter, photojournalist, playwright, and radio broadcaster. The presentation pays particular attention to her complex experience of work in Europe and America in 1940s as a single woman and her creative representations of a sophisticated and resilient China that challenged colonialist and racist prejudices to mobilise global audiences in support of Chinese resistance. Guo's wartime writings merged the national and the global, the individual and the collective, interweaving ideas of women's and national liberation with a cosmopolitan sensibility forged during a time of multiple displacements. Taking Guo Jingqiu as a case study, the paper affirms the importance of multilingual Chinese women in China's World War Two cultural diplomacy.

**Jennifer Bond (University College London)** – *From Labour Activist to Christian Diplomat: Uncovering the International Career of Deng Yuzhi 鄧裕志*

This paper takes as a case-study Cora Deng or Deng Yuzhi 鄧裕志 (1900-1996). Missionary educated, Deng is best known for her domestic career as a left-wing labour activist who helped the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) contact women workers in Shanghai through her work as a Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) Industrial secretary. However, when we examine her life using a transnational lens, the story becomes more complicated and much less familiar. Deng was sponsored by the YWCA to study at the London School of Economics (LSE) and New York University. In 1929 she interned at the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva. Her fluency in English and familiarity working within international organisations made her well suited to represent Chinese Christian women internationally. After 1949 she acted as a diplomat, representing the PRC abroad as the leader of YWCA of China and executive member of the Women's Federation. Why has Deng's international career largely been

forgotten? Drawing on extensive oral history interviews conducted by Emily Honig with Deng in 1985, Deng's contemporary writings and archival sources from China, USA and Switzerland, the paper probes how Deng interpreted her diplomatic career to diverse audiences in China and abroad at different moments in the 1930s, 1950s and 1980s. The paper highlights the methodological challenges of using oral history for conducting global micro-historical research and the problems that attend writing Chinese women into the histories diplomacy and international women's organising.

**Ke Ren (College of the Holy Cross)** – *A Dual Feminist Biography of China and America: Youth, Activism, and Friendship in the Parallel Lives of Lu Cui and Molly Yard*

This paper examines the possibility of writing a dual biography of Lu Cui 陸璀 (1914-2015) and Molly Yard (1912-2005). A Tsinghua University student in the 1930s, Lu was a prominent voice in the National Salvation movement. As a member of the Chinese Communist Party, Lu participated in the 1936 and 1938 World Youth Congresses in Geneva and Vassar College, and toured North America to rally support for China's War of Resistance. One of her allies in the American Student Union was the China-born Swarthmore graduate Molly Yard, who would go to China in 1938 as part of a World Student Association delegation to meet with students and Nationalist and Communist leaders, including Mao Zedong. After WWII, Lu took charge of international work in the PRC Women's Federation and participated in international congresses of the Women's International Democratic Federation, while Yard was active in local Democratic politics in Pennsylvania. Following the Cultural Revolution, Lu served as vice president of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and hosted Yard on a return visit to China in 1987, shortly before Yard was elected president of the National Organization of Women in the United States and lead campaigns for women's political and reproductive rights. This paper discusses the exciting multi-sited archives and sources – as well as the historiographical implications and methodological challenges – in writing a transnational dual biography as a way of exploring the parallel and intertwined histories of youth, women, and activism in twentieth-century China and the United States.

[366] Qijin Han (University of Tübingen). *Is Qi (Not) Air? Translating the European Thermometer to China during the Kangxi Reign (1662–1722).*

**Abstract.** The Jesuits' deployment of Western objects, books and knowledge was one of their most prominent strategies for promoting a top-down evangelisation in China. However, facing a society with a complex and different cosmology, the Jesuits had to sophisticatedly select and handle the Western scientific and technological knowledge they were to translate in order to make it comprehensible, acceptable, and even fashionable to the Chinese elite. This is clearly shown by two Jesuit attempts to introduce the European thermometer into the Manchu court during the Kangxi reign (1662–1722). However, why was one "successful" and the other not? How do they reflect the interaction between the Chinese cosmological qi and Jesuit meteorology? Aiming to answer these questions, this paper investigates, compares and contextualises the two cases based on a philological analysis of two related Jesuit treatises, Yanqi tushuo 驗氣圖說 (An Illustrated Explanation of Verifying Qi; 1671) written by Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–1688) and the recently discovered Yanqi hanshubiao shuo 驗氣寒暑表說 (An Explanation of the Cold-and-hot Meter [for Verifying Qi]; n.d.) drafted by his French successors. Apart from presenting the Jesuit efforts at the tangibilisation of qi, this study also highlights the necessity of recognising the initiative of different historical actors and applying holistic approaches in microhistorical studies. As a progress result of an ongoing doctoral project, this paper seeks to further our understanding of the dynamics of Sino-Western knowledge exchange in the era of early modern globalisation.

**Keywords:** thermometer, Jesuit science, Ferdinand Verbiest, French Jesuits, Yanqi tushuo, Yanqi hanshubiao shuo

[368] Qiyu Yang (University of Chicago), Fang Wu (University of Chicago) and Yuan Zhang (London School of Economics and Political Science). *Animals, Machines, and the Making of Natural Order in Chinese Political Cosmology.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines how "natural" order in China is manufactured out of unruly forces and how that work remains incomplete. It reconsiders the "Imperial Metaphor" of a smooth celestial bureaucracy by focusing on the frictions that emerge when non-human agents are incorporated into political visions of order.

Two papers analyze the technical production of imperial order. One reads the excavated Wuji 五紀 as a founding narrative in which the Yellow Emperor's monstrous son Chiyou 蚩尤 is dismembered and technically reassembled into modular grids of force and space. In this account, unbounded charismatic violence is not morally resolved but captured within a proto-imperial regime of enumeration and spatialization. The other examines Han documents from Xuanquan 懸泉 Station to show that a relay horse was not simply a horse used for transport. It was an

administrative status produced through registration, bodily description, rationing, movement, service assignment, veterinary attention, and liability procedures. Here, order did not begin from a stable natural category. It was sustained through repeated work on living animal bodies whose usefulness could fail, change, or end.
The third paper places ethnographic pressure on the "Imperial Metaphor." A study of fox spirits in rural Shanxi describes a religious world that does not cohere into a single bureaucratic order. Fox spirits occupy ambiguous, liminal spaces, mediate family tensions, and embody marginal social positions. They are approached through "blind guessing"—speculative, embodied practices that acknowledge partiality and coexist uneasily with official imaginaries.
Juxtaposing mythic genealogy, imperial infrastructure, and village religion, the panel argues that Chinese political cosmology was not simply a model of perfect correspondence between Heaven, state, and society. It was an ongoing effort to place unstable beings within usable forms of order. Animals, machines, monsters, and spirits reveal both the technical labor behind such order and the lives that continued to exceed it.
**Keywords:** Non-Human Agency, Political Cosmology, Imperial Infrastructures

**Qiyu Yang (University of Chicago)** – *Monstrous Bodies, Technical Machines, and the Making of Order: Cosmological Politics in the Wuji 五紀*
In the late Warring States, thinkers grappled with the foundations of political-cosmic order. While classical texts usually ground order in moral lineage and ritual hierarchy, the newly excavated Wuji 五紀 offers a disquieting alternative: it derives order from the violent dismantling and technical reassembly of a rebellion within the Yellow Emperor's household. This paper asks how the Wuji relocates the foundations of order from moral kinship to the modular, quantified management of unbounded charismatic violence, and what this shift reveals about early imperial ideology. In the Wuji, Chiyou 蚩尤 is not a monstrous enemy but the Yellow Emperor's son, whose revolt collapses the ancestral framework anchoring political order. His rebellion unleashes extra-kin charismatic violence ignoring lineage constraints. The Emperor responds not by restoring kinship but by killing, dismembering, and ritually consuming his son; fragments of Chiyou's monstrous body are seized, classified, and redeployed as modular units that organize force and space—tactical formations, directional markers, and repeatable grids. What begins as a rupture of lineage escalates into free-floating charismatic violence, only to be technically reworked into an administrable order. I argue that the Wuji compresses into a single genealogy a three-stage history of authority: the negation of Zhou-style clan order, the release of Warring States militarized charisma, and its capture by a proto-imperial regime of enumeration and spatialization. Read in this light, the Chiyou-Yellow Emperor cycle functions as an early Chinese founding myth of empire, dramatizing the transition from lineage to militarism to administrative sovereignty.
**Fang Wu (University of Chicago)** – *A Relay Horse Was Not Just a Horse: Animal Status and the Production of Order in Early China*
This paper argues that the Han "relay horse" was not simply a horse used for transport, but an administrative status produced through documentary and material practice. Drawing on excavated legal and administrative documents from Xuanquan 懸泉 Station, it examines how living horses were made to count as relay horses through registration, bodily description, rationing, movement, service assignment, veterinary attention, and procedures for removal from active use.
The Xuanquan documents show that relay-horse status did not depend on zoological classification alone. A horse entered this status through registers that recorded its color, sex, age, height, bodily marks, and name. It remained within the category through repeated acts of feeding, dispatching, inspection, and accounting. It could also leave the category before death, when old age, illness, injury, or unsuitability made it no longer fit for relay service. The relay horse therefore joined animal body, administrative position, and infrastructural function. By following how relay horses were registered, maintained, and withdrawn, this paper shifts attention from horses as symbolic or military animals to horses as administrative bodies within the everyday machinery of Han frontier society. In this sense, the relay horse offers a concrete case for thinking about how political order was made through sustained work on non-human bodies. The Xuanquan case reveals how early imperial administration transformed unstable animal life into usable order without fully eliminating bodily contingency.
**Yuan Zhang (London School of Economics and Political Science)** – *Beyond the Imperial Metaphor: Fox Spirits, Spatial Ethics, and Religious Ambiguity in Rural North China*
Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in rural Shanxi between 2022-2024, this study examines contemporary oral narratives about fox spirits (huxian) to reconsider the 'imperial metaphor' in Chinese religion. While scholars have long debated whether Chinese gods mirror earthly bureaucracy, ethnographic analysis of fox spirit stories

reveals that popular religious practice operates less through systematic hierarchical logic than through embodied spatial and ethical sensibilities. In Xuhao village, fox spirits remain prominent in oral tradition. Villagers recount stories of foxes dwelling in household spaces, forming alliances with officials, mediating family disputes, and oscillating between beneficial and harmful influences. Unlike formally positioned household gods who occupy architecturally designated locations, fox spirits resist stable spatial ordering—they appear in ambiguous places, cross boundaries between domestic and public realms, and defy attempts at bureaucratic containment. Theu embody marginal social categories—migrants, entertainers, shamans, young women navigating patrilocal marriage—whose dangerous yet desirable qualities subvert dominant cultural norms. These narrative patterns challenge simplistic applications of the imperial metaphor. What matters is not adherence to a universal celestial administrative system but rather negotiating appropriate relationships through spatial positioning, temporal rhythms, and ethical reciprocity. Fox spirits exemplify what villagers call “blind guessing” (xia lianxiang): speculative, experiential knowledge that acknowledges its own partiality while remaining pragmatically efficacious. The fox cult thrives not despite but because of its ambiguity. Rather than reflecting a unified celestial bureaucracy, these practices reveal how spatial techniques, ethical reciprocity, and embodied orientations structure divine-human relations in ways that both accommodate and resist official order.

[370] Yutong Liang (Royal College of Art). *Chinese Social and Ideological Transformation and International Status Change Behind the "New Chinese Style".*

**Abstract.** This research project aims to deconstruct "New Chinese Style" (Xin Zhong Shi), moving it from a vague commercial buzzword to a rigorous object of analysis. The study adopts a multi-layered framework to examine this emerging phenomenon.

First, it establishes the genealogy of the term. This involves interrogating the latent political-linguistic connection between the consumer neologism and the multi-ethnic concept of "Zhonghua Minzu", while situating the style relative to the Hanfu Movement and Guochao (China Chic) to clarify their intersectional and conflicting relationships.

Second, utilizing the "Mamianqun" (horse-face skirt) as a primary case study, the research explores how traditional material culture is decontextualized for everyday wear and how incidents like the 2022 Dior controversy reveal "layered nationalisms".

Third, the project investigates the socio-psychological mechanisms driving this trend, hypothesizing an "anxious turn" where economic uncertainty fuels a demand for cultural identity. It examines how revived yet commodified Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist aesthetics are mobilized to offer spiritual solace, a process mediated by state propaganda and algorithmic platforms.

Finally, it examines the trend’s diffusion through digital platforms like Rednote and burgeoning local institutions like Shanghai Fashion Week. It questions whether this decentralized proliferation, combined with the rise of non-Western fashion centres, challenges the authority of the Euro-centric global fashion system.

**Keywords:** Cultural Nationalism, Fashion Studies, Invented Tradition, Material Culture, Consumption

[371] Wanzhi He (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich). *The Standardization of Compassion: Zunshi's Liturgies and Doctrinal Arguments on the Feeding Hungry Ghosts Ritual in the Northern Song Tiantai School.*

**Abstract.** The flourishing of Buddhism in the Northern Song dynasty saw a key figure in the Tiantai school, the eminent monk Ciyun Zunshi 慈雲遵式 (964–1032), who dedicated himself to revitalizing and systematizing the Tiantai tradition, primarily through the reconstruction and reformation of important Buddhist rituals. Specifically, this study focuses on the highly influential and still widely practiced Ritual of Feeding the Hungry Ghosts (Shi egui 施餓鬼). This study aims to illuminate Zunshi's pivotal role in the transformative process of the Feeding Ritual in China and examine the impact of his reforms on both doctrinal stability and popular piety.

Drawing on textual criticism and socio-historical analysis, this research analyzes Zunshi’s liturgies and doctrinal arguments on the ritual’s purpose, concepts, and procedure. By comparing his work with preceding ritual texts, sutras, and contemporary lay interpretations, the analysis illuminates the mechanism by which the ritual was reformed. The findings reveal how Zunshi’s adaptation reconciled the doctrinal needs of the monastic community with the spiritual demands of the lay world. Ultimately, this analysis underscores Zunshi’s significant contribution to the standardization of the Feeding Ritual in Chinese Buddhist history, a process that simultaneously facilitated its popularization in daily life.

**Keywords:** Zunshi, Tiantai School, Feeding Hungry Ghosts Ritual, Standardization

[372] Xiao Liu (Tsinghua University), Xinyue Li (University of Manchester) and Yifan Song (Durham University). *Title: Making Weather Knowledge in Modern China: Grassroots Observation, Folk Wisdom, and Transnational Exchanges.*

**Abstract.** The atmosphere is global while weather is regional. Weather observation and forecasting require not only general scientific principles and standardized practices but also an understanding of local environments and the synthesis of data from varied sites. Weather science links local, regional, and global processes. This special character made it possible to place domestic regions of China and China as a region within the same analytic framework. With a focus on weather, this panel explores how scientific, vernacular, and transnational forms of understanding the atmosphere interacted with, challenged, and reshaped one another throughout the 20th century. Xiao Liu demonstrates that a functional grassroots precipitation observation network was operational in North China during the Republican era, proving that meteorological initiatives were implemented to some degree. Xinyue Li argues that scientific interest in weather proverbs in Republican China was shaped by the New Culture Movement and by foreign meteorological practices, which fostered a new perspective that foregrounded the regional character of weather proverbs. Yifan Song investigates the early PRC's synoptic meteorology, showing how transnational methods, circulating through Soviet, Western, and regional channels, were selectively adapted and blended with indigenous understandings of Chinese weather to address local atmospheric conditions and political priorities.
Collectively, these presentations will demonstrate that indigenous knowledge was not a static relic but an active, albeit often contested, resource. By centering vernacular epistemology in dialogue with transnational scientific currents, this panel provides a more nuanced understanding of China's meteorological history and its encounter with global science.

**Keywords:** Chinese Science, Folk Wisdom, Grassroots Observation, Transnational Exchanges

**Xiao Liu (Tsinghua University)** – *Beyond Plans and Failures: Grassroots Implementation of Rainfall Monitoring during the Republic of China*

This paper aims to reassess the development and operational effectiveness of meteorological stations during the Republic of China. Existing scholarship generally acknowledges that, despite systematic and detailed plans for the construction of meteorological stations, severe shortages in human, material, and financial resources resulted in the establishment of only a limited number of stations. Consequently, the meteorological services provided were relatively inadequate. Moreover, scholarly consensus remains skeptical regarding how these stations actually performed their functions—specifically, whether they consistently collected and maintained meteorological data, which is essential for both research and operational services. The fragmented preservation of relevant meteorological archives has further complicated efforts to evaluate the practical effectiveness of meteorological services during this period. By analyzing newly discovered original records from over one hundred grassroots rain gauge stations in North China, this study demonstrates that a functional precipitation observation network did exist at the local level. These findings indicate that the meteorological initiatives of the time were, to some extent, implemented rather than entirely unrealized. This discovery not only fills a gap in the historical understanding of grassroots meteorological practices in Republican China but also provides critical archival evidence for reinterpreting the development of meteorology and the capacity of meteorological services during this period.

**Xinyue Li (University of Manchester)** – *The Discovery of Weather Proverbs in Republican China*

This paper sketches the complex relationship between folk weather wisdom and meteorology. Rather than reducing it to a simple narrative of the latter replacing the former, it calls attention to the scientific interests in weather proverbs, examining the weather proverb-collecting activities of Chinese meteorologists in Republican China. By the end of the 19th century, drawing on instrument-generated meteorological data from a wide range of locations to create a weather map had become a dominant method for national-level weather forecasting. However, this article notices that scientists became even more interested in the local weather experiences after meteorology became a professionalised field. Did the prognostic value of weather proverbs naturally appeal to meteorologists? How did they integrate regional environmental knowledge into the application of general meteorological principles? Current literature tends to assume that scientists naturally recognised the scientific value of local experiences. In contrast, I argue the key role of social context in influencing scientific interests in weather proverbs. It was the iconoclasm in the New Culture Movement that raised the visibility of weather proverbs among scientists. Foreign meteorological practices strengthened the impetus to investigate the scientific value of folklore. Under the new scientific perspective on proverbs, the regional character of weather proverbs came into clearer focus, while local experiences travelled beyond geographical boundaries and gained significance at the national level. Also, this article highlights a methodological shift in using weather proverbs with the meteorological

network expanding in Republican China.

**Yifan Song (Durham University)** – *Remaking Weather Science: Transnational Methods and Indigenous Knowledge in Early PRC China*

This study examines the transnational epistemic formation of weather in the early People's Republic of China (PRC). Far from being an insular socialist project, the PRC's synoptics in the 1950s and early 1960s emerged at the intersection of multiple scientific lineages: Soviet synoptics, Western empirical–statistical methods circulating through pre-PRC intellectual networks, and indigenous regime ranging from the practical use of weather lore to the theoretical exploration of Chinese weather. Rather than treating these strands as discrete or mutually incompatible, the study argues that early PRC synoptic practices were shaped through the continual negotiation of these heterogeneous epistemic resources under the conditions of geopolitical pressure and infrastructural scarcity. By tracing the flows of experts, textbooks, instruments, and analytical routines across international and science-nonscience boundaries, the study seeks to reveal how Chinese meteorologists selectively appropriated and reconfigured foreign meteorological knowledge in order to accommodate local atmospheric regimes, institutional constraints, and the political imperatives of socialist science.

[373] Feifei Wang (Hunan University), Shuang Lyu (Xidian University), Wen Sun (Xidian University) and Yuyao Cheng (Hangzhou City University). *Texts, Rituals, and Power: The Political Dimension and Local Integration of Religious Activities in Late Imperial China.*

**Abstract.** In late Imperial China, the process of integration between state power and local society was profoundly reflected in the state's definition, utilization, and textualization of the religious domain. Religious activities were far from mere expressions of faith; they constituted a complex arena interwoven with political discipline, cultural negotiation, and social construction. Through textual production and ritual performance, the court, local elites, and religious groups collectively participated in a lasting interaction concerning legitimacy, identity, and order. This panel aims to systematically reveal, through case studies across different periods, how religion served as a crucial medium for the penetration of state power into local society, and conversely, how local societies responded to and adapted this process.

The Tang case shows how the imperial house, by presiding over eminent monks' stūpa burials, appropriated Buddhist symbols into political ceremonies. This ritual strategy showcased imperial favor and achieved top-down discipline. In a different social context, the Jin-Yuan stūpa inscriptions of Buddhist nuns reveal complex identity negotiations between monastic ideals and Confucian ethics. As imperial politics evolved, the stripped northern Ming princes turned to managing temple networks to maintain frontier influence, illustrating strategic adaptation. Conversely, in the textual realm of southern China's Ming-Qing Lingnan, gazetteers employed "demystification" to integrate local Buddhist figures into the Confucian knowledge system, thereby merging popular beliefs into orthodox history.

**Keywords:** State Power, Local Society, Religious Domain, Textualization, North & South China

**Wen Sun (Xidian University)** – *Imperial Power and Buddhist Sanctity: Tang Patronage in Stūpa Burials and Religious Identity Construction*

The Tang dynasty was a flourishing period of stūpa burial, and with it, the stūpa inscriptions prospered as a distinctive literary form. This article, with a focus on imperial engagement in stūpa burials during the Tang dynasty, utilizes stūpa inscriptions as primary sources of evidence to explore the involvement of the imperial authority in Buddhist rituals, further examining the interrelationship among imperial power, ritual practices, and religious identities. Through the process of dispatching officials to supervise funerals, supporting the construction of funerary stūpas, conferring posthumous titles for clerics and honorific titles for funerary stūpas, imperial intervention effectively transformed Buddhist funerary practices into public events, contributing to constructing Buddhist identity of clerics. Besides, the active participation of members of the imperial family facilitated the interaction between Buddhist rituals with traditional Chinese funerary customs, making these rituals transcend religious boundaries and social hierarchies. The dual role of imperial engagement with Buddhist burials underscore the importance of viewing imperial patronage of Buddhist practices as both a strategic and a spiritual endeavor.

**Feifei Wang (Hunan University)** – *Between Leaving the Home and Staying: the Faith of BuddhistNuns as Reflected in Stupa Inscriptions in North China of the Jin and Yuan Dynasties*

During the Jin and Yuan dynasties, intellectual culture and social structures developed in north China that were different from the southern regions. Within this pluralistic social environment, female monastic communities presented complications to our understanding of Buddhist religious faith in this period. Under the permeating

influence of traditional Confucian doctrines, on the one hand, some women still maintained close relationships with their lay families after they became Buddhist nuns. This led to the practice of "leaving home but not separating from the family." On the other hand, with the flourishing of Buddhism and its doctrines of leaving the secular world to take up monasticism, some communities of nuns developed an identity of social independence as well as a sense of female autonomy. This bifurcation led to problems in the narrative of stupa inscriptions for nuns, resulting in the unique phenomenon of "double inscriptions" for a single tomb occupant. In this complicated way, female monastic communities simultaneously adhered to the doctrine of separation from secular society, as well as filial adherence to one's family. This phenomenon demonstrates the limitations of the social reintegration of Buddhist power in this period. And, the social status of those nuns cannot simply be interpreted in terms of increasing or decreasing influence. Rather, it should be explored in terms of the dual nature of actual real-life practices in this era.

**Shuang Lyu (Xidian University)** – *Imperial Presence: Religious Activities and Local Governance of Princely Establishments in the Northern Frontier of the Ming Dynasty*

The Ming founder Zhu Yuanzhang instituted a feudal system that placed his sons in key northern frontier regions as a "protective screen" for the imperial court. The six princely establishments of Qin, Jin, Dai, Su, Qing, and Han represented the concrete implementation of this strategy. Although subsequent rulers imposed numerous restrictions to curb their influence, these princely houses continued to exert considerable sway over local society. Frontier societies were inherently complex, yet official records often provided oversimplified depictions, focusing predominantly on the princes' transgressions. Such biased documentation calls for a critical reassessment of power relations in the northern borderlands. Drawing on local gazetteers and epigraphic materials, this study examines the religious engagements of the six princely establishments to reinterpret their role in regional governance. Findings indicate that these princely houses constructed hierarchical religious networks centered around incense-burning temples, through which they deeply embedded themselves in local affairs. Economically, faced with shortfalls in the stipend system, religious donations and temple management became vital means of financial sustenance. Politically, as their authority was curtailed, religious activities provided a legitimate platform for building strategic networks with military and literary elites. Through ritual participation and temple patronage, they not only reinforced their social prestige but also perpetuated the symbolic function of "imperial presence" in the frontier. This study argues that the religious activities of the northern princely establishments constituted an adaptive strategy, allowing this privileged group to sustain its governance role amid institutional constraints and the distinctive conditions of the northern frontier.

**Yuyao Cheng (Hangzhou City University)** – *Textual Mediation and Cultural Integration: The Compilation and Discursive Strategy of the "Immortals and Buddhists" Section in Ming and Qing Guangdong Gazetteers (1535–1800)*

The flourishing of local gazetteer (方志 fangzhi) compilation during the Ming and Qing dynasties established a standardized textual framework for documenting regional history, serving both the administrative agenda of the imperial state and the cultural needs of local elites. This paper investigates the Xianshi (仙释, Immortals and Buddhists) section in Guangdong gazetteers, analyzing how religious narratives—often viewed as heterodox—were incorporated, legitimized, and textually transformed into components of localized historical knowledge. Through comparative textual analysis of the three major Ming provincial Tongzhi and subsequent county gazetteers, the study reveals a tiered system of ideological negotiation. At the provincial level, compilers frequently placed Xianshi in "Outer Records" (外志) and employed fierce rhetorical condemnation in the prefaces, signaling allegiance to the Confucian orthodox revival. Conversely, county gazetteers—driven by local gentry agency—demonstrate a greater tendency toward cultural integration.

The core textual strategy across all levels was one of "de-mystification". Compilers actively historicized religious figures by removing explicit theological doctrine, sectarian ranks, and supernatural claims, focusing instead on verifiable geographic traces (在地化) and official endorsements (赐额). This textual adaptation process converted transcendent spiritual narratives into immanent, controllable historical artifacts, thereby mediating the tension between Imperial orthodoxy and pervasive regional faith. The evolution from the Ming's ideological gatekeeping to the Qing's pragmatic, administrative inclusion (justified by the figures' status as registered, tax-paying subjects) underscores the increasing bureaucratization of cultural governance in late imperial China.

[382] Olivia Milburn (University of Hong Kong), Oliver Hon Man Chan (Hong Kong Baptist University), Ming Tak Ted Hui (University of Oxford) and Xuehong Han (University of Hong Kong). *Literary Landscapes: Cultural Memory and the Chinese Umwelt.*

**Abstract.** This panel explores the way in which literature from the Song to the Qing associated landscape, flora, and fauna with traditions of remembrance. Drawing on a wide range of literary traditions in both poetry and prose, the

papers in this panel demonstrate that the landscapes and animal world of China were subject to creation and recreation, as people (both elites and commoners) imposed acts of memory upon specific environmental elements. The first paper describes the tradition commemorating Ge Xuan's (164–244) ascension to heaven as a Daoist immortal at Ruoye Mountain (and the concomitant apparition of a numinous white deer), whereby this locale functioned as a locus of memory from the Song dynasty onwards. The second paper considers narratives of martyrdom imposed upon landscapes connected with Yue Fei (1103-1142) and the way that these interpretations impacted tourism to battlefields and tombs during the Yuan. The third paper analyzes the fanggu movement and its impact on the cultural landscape, understanding stele as no more than permanent-seeming commemorative structures that can be physically moved and then reinterpreted in new contexts. Finally, the fourth paper considers a long tradition of counter-cultural writings about rejecting a conventional funeral and burial in a tomb, demanding instead that one's corpse become part of nature by being consumed by scavenging birds. Together, these papers explore some of the many ways in which the landscape and environment were enlisted as a focus and support for the human desire to remember the past and commemorate the dead.
**Keywords:** Memory, Death, Landscape, Flora, Fauna

**Oliver Hon Man Chan (Hong Kong Baptist University)** – *Lamenting Yue Fei (1103-1142) in Travel Literature in the Yuan Dynasty: Its Commemorative Writings and Sites on Death, Loyalty, and Memory*
The experience of wars in the Southern Song Dynasty and its aftermath allow us to pursue our inquiry on the cross section between the commemorative writings of martyrs, archetypes of loyalty and heroism, as well as psychoanalytic, literary, and cultural studies down the line of literary historical perspective from the Song to the Yuan Dynasties. One notable feature is that Yuan literature about the accounts of the fall of the Southern Song and archetypes of wartime heroes tends to constitute places of commemoration (including ruins, tombs, and travel spots in the human environment) that associate the Yuan cataclysm and its martyrs and archetypes of loyalty and heroism. This paper will focus on the representations of the Song hero Yue Fei (1103-1142) in Yuan times and ask the following questions on the relationships between war, trauma, commemorative sites, and travel literature: accounts about the commemoration of Yue Fei shared many themes
– the horrors of death, the enhancement and destruction of commemorative sites for Yue Fei, the pain of loss and displacement, human vulnerability, and nostalgia of the past – how these lyrical voices and highly stylized language constituted the huaigu writing and created cultural travel in Yuan times. This paper will investigate why wartime poetry and prose were an important factor in pivoting new developments in the construction of the archetypes of martyrs, heroism, and commemorative sites in the Yuan Dynasty.

**Ming Tak Ted Hui (Oxford University)** – *Layered Timescapes: Epigraphic Practice and Historical Imagination in Hebei*
This paper examines the intellectual significance of visiting antiquities (fanggu 訪古) in the Hebei region by comparing two projects separated by six centuries: Naixian's 廼賢 (ca. 1309–1363) Yuan-dynasty travel notes, Heshuo fanggu ji 河朔訪古記, and Gu Xieguang's 顧燮光 (1875–1949) Republican-era antiquarian writings. Although epigraphy is often viewed through the lens of Song evidential scholarship, these works reveal alternative approaches to inscriptions, landscape, and historical memory. Naixian's travelogue, surviving only through 134 fragments in the Yongle dadian, records his journey across northern China. While the text treats inscriptions as points where multiple temporalities intersect, he shows how steles could be moved, altered, or reinterpreted in response to shifting political circumstances and personal networks. Gu Xieguang's projects, while presented as a sequel to Naixian's work, are shaped by Qing evidential scholarship and emerging modern heritage concerns. His documentation is more systematic, yet also attentive to the experiential texture of travel and to the disappearance and commodification of material culture. These writings reveal both continuity with and divergence from Naixian's approach, especially regarding how the landscape is observed and interpreted. Placing these two projects in dialogue, this paper argues that fanggu is not merely the gathering of epigraphic data, but a practice shaped by embodied experience, spatial imagination, and the tension between the supposed permanence of stone and the fluidity of historical change.

**Xuehong Han (University of Hong Kong)** – *The Legend of Ge Xuan and the White Deer: The Mark of Ascension and the Construction of Ruoye Mountain*
This paper is concerned with literary representations of the legend of Ge Xuan's (164–244) ascension as a transcendent and the concomitant apparition of a white deer in local gazetteers of Shaoxing, Zhejiang from the Song to the Ming dynasty. These events took place at Ruoye Mountain, and are widely documented in imperial era literature. By examining the diachronic change of this legend in Shaoxing gazetteers, as well as other geographical books, this paper explores the intersection of folklore, animal humanities, and environmental history, in writings

commemorating the illustrious dead. When Ge Xuan ascended to immortality at Ruoye Mountain, his table made of white tung wood was transformed first into a white tiger in the earliest known version of this legend, and then into a white deer with three legs and two heads in later, more popular iterations. Despite this variation, this legend embodies two popular themes: the connection between ascension and the appearance of charismatic, numinous animals like white tigers or deer, and the motif of transformation between animals and other life forms or substances. This legend connected Ge Xuan's ascension to the landscape of Ruoye Mountain, and to cultural animals. On the one hand, attaching this story to a specific regional landscape made the legend of his ascension more convincing and memorable. On the other hand, the compilers of the gazetteers constructed the Ruoye Mountain as a Daoist sacred site through this connection, concealing its connection with Buddhism and its history of oppression and violence.

**Olivia Milburn (University of Hong Kong)** – *Corpse Fauna and the Poetry of an Unconventional Life and Death*

This paper explores a genre of carpe diem poetry in China, created during the Song dynasty through the fusion of a passage in the Zhuangzi and writings about Liu Ling (221-300 CE), one of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove. Carpe diem poetry is defined by the way in which it promotes enjoyment, encouraging people to experience all the sensual delights they can before they are claimed by death. From the biography of Liu Ling, later poets were inspired to represent uninhibited drinking as the greatest of human pleasures. However, unlike carpe diem poetry from other parts of the world, which focus exclusively on enjoying pleasurable experiences prior to death, the Chinese genre also considered what would happen to the body postmortem, and how to extend enjoyment into the funerary proceedings. Following the Zhuangzi, which challenged the primacy of burial as the only culturally acceptable way of disposing of the dead, poets chose to explore the possibility of leaving their bodies to be exposed to the elements, at the mercy of scavenging birds, rather than being quietly consumed by insects in the tomb. These writings question human-centered valuations of corpse fauna: are the crows and kites which scavenge openly any more revolting than the ants and other insects that consume the body in the grave? Poetic works from the Song to the Qing celebrated the enjoyment of an unconventional life, followed by an unconventional funeral after death, as the finest expression of human existence, free from petty constraints.

[385] Jing-Jia Huang (National Taiwan Normal University). *A Study of the Images and Gender Consciousness of Chan Women in Materials from the Tang and Song Dynasties.*

**Abstract.** Although Chan Buddhism generally maintains a more equitable perspective on gender, its historical materials primarily feature male Chan masters, making the scattered records of female practitioners particularly valuable. This study focuses on the historical sources related to Chan women during the Tang and Song dynasties and integrates religious and gender perspectives to explore the religious images and gender consciousness associated with these women. First, we provide a comprehensive compilation and analysis of historical materials on Chan women from the Tang and Song periods. Second, we examine the attitudes of male Chan masters toward women and gender in order to understand the lived context and gender culture surrounding Chan women. Third, we trace the historical representations of Chan women who transcended gender frameworks in Chan records from the Tang to the Song dynasties and investigate aspects of gender consciousness that have been overlooked in previous scholarship. In doing so, we respond to the critiques of feminist Buddhist scholars who argue that Chan historical materials are characterized by male-centered gender consciousness. This study contributes to a clearer understanding of the wisdom embodied by Chan women and helps to construct a more complete history of female practitioners in the Tang and Song dynasties.

**Keywords:** Chan Women, Chan Historical Materials, Gender Consciousness, Gender Images, Tang and Song Dynasties

[386] Xiaoyan Gao (Tohoku University). *The Political Origin of Chinese Communist Party's Legal Localism : Evidence from Provincial and County-Level Archives.*

**Abstract.** This paper investigates the origin of the CCP's distinctive system of legal localism. Legal localism refers to the practice in China whereby local Party committees hold authority to formulate criminal policies, mediate disputes among legal institutions, and at times intervene directly in trials. Conventional explanations of this arrangement emphasize ideology: as a communist party, the CCP is presumed to view legal institutions as instruments of class rule and therefore justified in subordinating courts and procuracies to Party leadership. While ideology explains why the Party asserts control, it does not explain why such control became entrenched specifically at the local level.

Drawing on provincial and county-level archives, this paper argues that legal localism was the political outcome of

intra-party confrontation in the 1950s. The CCP initially sought to build a centralized Soviet-style legal system in which local Party authorities had no mandate to intervene. Yet this design quickly destabilized once the socialist construction campaign began. Overdemanding central directives required local authorities to mobilize all available resources for political tasks, prompting them to manipulate legal procedures even as central legal authorities insisted on adherence to law. This structural contradiction became unmanageable after 1956, when de-Stalinization within the socialist camp intensified pressure in China to clarify institutional authority. Mao Zedong ultimately resolved the conflict by empowering local Party committees to exercise decisive legal oversight. This intra-party confrontation, the paper argues, constituted the political origin of China's enduring system of legal localism.
**Keywords:** Chinese Communist Party, Socialist Legality, Political-legal Committee, Police, Procuracy, Court, Socialist Construction, Mao Zedong

[387] Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann (CNRS). *Mainland versus Insular: Alternative Concepts of Terrestrial Space in Early China Visualised through Traditional Cartography.*

**Abstract.** This presentation calls attention to up to now overlooked coexistence of two different spatial frameworks underlying conceptualisation and representation of terrestrial space through the continuous Chinese cultural tradition. These are a view of the Chinese territory as a monolith piece of land or a mainland, or, alternatively, as fragmented into several pieces of land divided by waterways or as a dense cluster of islands. A mainland concept reflects real topology of East Asia and is its most current spatial image both in traditional Chinese and modern Western maps of China. ne can hardly imagine another view of the Chinese Empire, yet a different visual option does exist. It came to light due to commercial general maps of the late Qing Empire recently acquired at map auctions by such research institutions as the Max-Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin (2016-2017, https://dlc.mpg.de/image/1025141180/1/LOG_0000 and https://dlc.mpg.de/image/1030255865/1/LOG_0000/), and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (2021, https://lbezone.hkust.edu.hk/bib/991013146517503412). These maps drawn in 1899-1902 originate from the Fenye 分野 ("Field Allocation") maps, or maps showing correspondences between the territorial units of the Chinese Empire and heavenly bodies, are found in the so-called Chinese Household Encyclopaedia of the early 17th century. I shall try to trace a direct link between the early Chinese descriptions of terrestrial space dating from the 4th c. BC through the 1st c. AD and the later insular maps of the imperial realm, which help to grasp the early insular concept.
**Keywords:** concepts of terrestrial space, early Chinese terrestrial descriptions, traditional Chinese cartography

[391] Chiao-In Chen (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona). *Negotiating Faith and State: The Order of Preachers in Taiwan under Japanese Colonization (1895-1945).*

**Abstract.** The Dominican mission returned to Formosa in 1859 and soon consolidated its evangelization efforts in southern Taiwan. One of the missionaries' main challenges was navigating the complex coexistence of diverse communities on the island, including the Paiwan indigenous groups and the Chinese Hokkien settlers. The Order of Preachers invested significant effort in evangelizing the Igorrotes–Paiwan communities, especially through pastoral outreach and catechetical formation.

After the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, Taiwan became part of the Japanese Empire, introducing a new phase of challenges. The colonial government promoted an emperor-centered ideology and State Shinto, while enforcing a policy of "assertive secularism" that limited religious instruction in state-accredited institutions. Under these conditions, the Dominican mission had to adopt careful strategies to preserve its work.

This proposal examines the Dominican evangelization strategy and the measures taken to ensure institutional survival under Japanese religious policy. At the local organizational level, the mission sought to strengthen local leadership by expanding the formation of catechists, including beatas who were not members of religious orders since foreign missionaries often encountered political and cultural restrictions.

At the same time, the Dominicans cooperated with Japanese authorities in promoting education. Notable examples include the founding of Blessed Imelda School in Taipei in 1916, and the construction of the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in 1923—both outcomes of successful negotiation with colonial officials. Following the Vatican's 1936 guidance, missionaries instructed the faithful that participation in State Shinto rites—such as shrine visits or patriotic ceremonies—carried a purely civil or patriotic meaning. This stance, consistent with Catholic practice in Japan, allowed the Dominican mission to avoid unnecessary conflict and maintain its presence during the colonial period.
**Keywords:** Japanese colonization in Taiwan, The Order of Preachers, State Shintoism, Japanese imperialism, Catholicisim in Taiwan

[392] Ming-Che Lee (National Taipei University of Business). *"Worlding" Queer Voices from Taiwan: The Transcultural Reception in Sinophone Europe.*

**Abstract.** Recent scholarship in world literature has shown a growing interest in the transcultural reception of Taiwanese queer writing in Sinophone Europe. This paper examines two seminal works—Chi Ta-wei's queer sci-fi novella Mo 膜 (The Membranes) and Kevin Chen's novel Gui difang 鬼地方 (Ghost Town)—and traces their circulation "as a mode of reading" within an Eurocentric world-literary space, where Taiwanese literature is often marginalized and subsumed under the plethoric notion of Chineseness. This study critically explores how and why these two texts have gained notable visibility in Europe, constructing a refreshing image of "Queer Taiwan" that resonates with mainstream Western values and evokes shared emotions on the one hand, while undermining the unidirectional mode of cultural export on the other. I argue that both works feature a distinctive "worlding agency," primarily activated through multiple translations, Taiwanized queerness, international exposure, and media representation. This agency is not static, but rigorously dynamic, allowing for a queer counterattack from Taiwan to the world. My analysis draws on David Damrosch's theoretical framework and Chiu Kuei-fen's discussion of Sinophone literature as world literature, foregrounding the negotiation and dialogue between these two works and the Eurocentric aesthetic values through the lens of cosmopolitan recognition. I conclude that queer-crafted fiction from Taiwan has begun to reshape European readers' understanding of Sinitic-language literature, thereby "worlding" Taiwanese queer voices in the landscape of 21st-century Sinophone Europe.

**Keywords:** Chi Ta-wei, Ghost Town, Kevin Chen, The Membranes, translation, worlding agency, world literature

[393] Liang Meng (University of Amsterdam), Kexuan Li (National University of Singapore) and Xinyang Li (University of Georgia). *Remaking Subjectivity: Chinese Youth across Social Pressures, Digital Worlds, and Transregional Imaginaries.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines how contemporary Chinese youth redefine subjectivity as they navigate overlapping pressures in social life, digital environments, and transregional imaginaries. Our point of departure is grounded in Chinese youth's everyday negotiations around passive resistance, temporality and aging, spirituality, gendered expectations, and feminist self-making. We explore how these concerns generate new modes of self-understanding and ethical positioning within China's rapidly transforming social landscape.

While Chinese experiences remain central, connections with Europe enter the picture as one of the symbolic and mediated horizons through youth imagine alternative possibilities. Through social media flows, algorithmic encounters, and selective migration narratives, European peers become part of youths' evolving imagined communities as fluid moral and experiential references that shape how agency and aspiration are articulated in China. Meanwhile, Chinese digital cultures and youth discourses increasingly circulate outward, subtly influencing how "Chinese youth" are perceived elsewhere.

The papers in this panel approach these dynamics from distinct analytical angles, examining youth moral imagination, gendered forms of soft resistance, temporal reordering in delayed adulthood, and spiritualised digital divination communities—collectively mapping how Chinese youth remake subjectivity across social, temporal, gendered and affective terrains.

The multi-sited design of the panel highlights how youth operate across both spatial and vertical dimensions - moving between physical constraints and digital worlds where alternative realities can be created when the offline environment feels immovable.

Together, we offer a China-centred account of how subjectivity is reconfigured from the bottom up, while acknowledging the limited but meaningful role of transregional imaginaries in shaping what it means to be young today.

**Keywords:** Contemporary Chinese Society, Youth Subjectivity, Imaginary Community

**Liang Meng (University of Amsterdam)** – *Girlhood Feminism as Soft Resistance: Affective Counterpublics and Algorithmic Negotiation on RedNote*

This article explores how Chinese female users tactically mobilise platform features and hashtag practices to construct vernacular forms and an exclusive space of feminist resistance under algorithmic and cultural constraints. Focusing on the reappropriation of the hashtag #Baby Supplementary Food (#BSF) on RedNote, a female-dominated lifestyle app with over 300 million users, we analyse how users create a female-centered counterpublic through self-infantilisation, algorithmic play, and aesthetic withdrawal. Using the Computer-Assisted Learning and Measurement framework, we analysed 1,580 posts and propose the concept of "girlhood feminism": an affective, culturally grounded form of soft resistance that refuses patriarchal life scripts without seeking direct confrontation

or visibility. Rather than challenging censorship and misogyny directly, users rework platform affordances and domestic idioms to carve out emotional and symbolic spaces of dissent. Situated within the broader dynamics of East Asia's compressed modernity, this essay advances a grounded framework for understanding how gendered publics are navigated, negotiated, and quietly reimagined in the algorithmically governed space.

**Kexuan Li (National University of Singapore)** – *Delayed Adulthood in Post-Socialist China: The Politics of Time and Digital Temporal Resistance among Youth*

In post-socialist China, growing numbers of young people are postponing marriage, deferring careers, and suspending the rush toward stability. This widespread "delay" is not mere hesitation but a subtle politics of time—a way of negotiating how, when, and even whether to become an adult in an age of structural precarity. This study conceptualizes delayed adulthood as both a temporal strategy, a moral stance, and a form of self-making. Drawing on the life-course perspective and the notion of the social clock, it explores how digital spaces enable new negotiations between time, agency, and belonging. Through qualitative media analysis of four Douban communities—Anti-Social Clock Alliance, Home-Stayers' League, Cross-Age Worries Forum, and Single-Since-Birth Support Group—the research examines how young people articulate frustration, share humor, and build solidarity through everyday storytelling. Findings show that these online communities function as micro-sites of temporal resistance: where delay becomes care, uncertainty becomes creativity, and failure becomes freedom. Extending my earlier research on China's gap-year phenomenon, this research situates delayed adulthood within broader transformations of temporality and subjectivity in post-socialist China, revealing how youth transform instability, not by escaping time—but by rewriting it.

**Xinyang Li (University of Georgia)** – *Digital Witchcraft as Affective Refuge: Youth, Mobility, and Subjectivity across Transregional Chinese Platforms*

This paper examines the resurgence of "witchcraft" and digital divination practices on TikTok, Rednote, and Bilibili as youth-driven strategies for constructing affective safe spaces across Mainland China and Europe. Rather than treating digital occult cultures as aesthetic trends or escapist fantasies, the study argues that they function as emotional infrastructures through which young people navigate precarity, mobility, and moral disorientation in the post-pandemic era. Across these platforms, youth circulate tarot readings, planetary rituals, energy cleansing tutorials, and symbolic witchcraft icons to articulate shared feelings of burnout, loneliness, and temporal anxiety. These practices generate what Sara Ahmed calls affective communities—collectives formed through emotion rather than ideology—where young people can momentarily suspend normative pressures around success, adulthood, and productivity, and experiment with alternative modes of selfhood. The figure of the "witch," itself a mistranslation that dislocates European religious history from Chinese indigenous wu traditions, becomes a productive symbol for reimagining autonomy, intuition, and embodied knowledge. Drawing on digital ethnography of cross-platform circulation, the paper shows how these micro-communities offer youth a portable, transregional moral world: one that travels with them as they move between cities, borders, and algorithmic environments. Digital witchcraft thus operates both as a form of quiet resistance to rationalized modernity and as a creative mode of subjectivity-reconstruction. By foregrounding how young people mobilize spiritualized media practices to craft intimacy, care, and new ethical possibilities, this study contributes to understanding Europe–Asia interactions from below in the digital age.

[394] Michael Malzer (University of Würzburg). *Sinicizing Global Aspirations at the Yellow River: Transformations Across Social Worlds in Urbanizing Yinchuan.*

**Abstract.** Yinchuan, capital of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in China's northwestern periphery, is commonly perceived as small and underdeveloped within the country's spatial hierarchy. In the dominant developmentalist discourse, lower-tier cities are often conceptualized as facing a temporal delay while still aspiring to developmental trajectories set by the country's coastal metropolises. This assumption neglects the simultaneous existence of a multitude of non-linear developmental patterns and contested social identities. In this ethnographic study of urbanizing Yinchuan, I analyze how urban transformation intersects with a range of civilizing discourses, which manifest themselves in both top-down and bottom-up ways across the city's diverse social worlds. I examine ideas of civility and modernity through elements that are perceived to be of foreign origin in the Chinese context: Islam, wine, and the English language, as well as more broadly imagined ideals of cosmopolitan urban life. In Yinchuan, these elements are involved in dynamic and contested processes of incorporation and adaptation into local and national contexts and do not stand in dichotomic opposition to an assumed form of "Chinese" culture. However, their perceived foreignness is a constitutive factor in the way local, national, and global contexts intersect in shaping identities and aspirations in urbanizing Yinchuan. While the party-state is actively advocating "civilized" behavior

and increasingly pushing to “Sinicize” cultural forms, urbanites across social worlds are simultaneously engaged in aspirational activities seeking self-improvement and connecting to a global sphere.
**Keywords:** Urbanization, City hierarchies, Civilizing discourses, Sinicization, Ethnography, Northwestern China

[402] Marco Fumian (University L'Orientale of Naples), Giorgio Ceccarelli (University Ca' Foscari of Venice), Nicoletta Pesaro (University Ca' Foscari of Venice) and Sabrina Rastelli (University Ca' Foscari of Venice).
*Negotiated Exchanges: Chinese Cultural Works “Going Global” and their Localized Instantiations.*
**Abstract.** Since the early 2000s, Chinese cultural enterprises have been encouraged by the authorities to “go global”, not only to boost the economic growth of the Chinese budding “cultural industries” but also improve the “cultural soft power” of the country turning China into a “cultural powerhouse”.
Xi Jinping, in particular, soon after his appointment as CCP General Secretary, warned about the need to “expand the capacity of the international communication … to tell China’s stories well, convey China’s voice effectively, and enhance our discourse power internationally”.
The Chinese writers and artists, in this context, were entrusted with the “irreplaceable” task, among others, to “charm” the foreign audiences by presenting them with the unique views of the Chinese people.
The purpose of this panel is therefore to explore what kind of cultural representations, and what specific dynamics of cultural international dissemination, have been promoted within this framework in the last fifteen years, focusing of the “literary/artistic” domains of literature, cinema and the arts.
Concentrating on a number of significant case studies, emphasis will be given both to the interaction between the Chinese official institutions and cultural industries, and between the Chinese cultural producers and the foreign cultural agents operating in the local markets, specifically in the West. These interactions will not be seen as monolithic one-way movements but as case-specific relations of co-production which may confirm of disprove the official narratives promoted at the central level.
Panel participants:
Giorgio Ceccarelli (University Ca’ Foscari of Venice), Marco Fumian (University of Naples L’Orientale, Nicoletta Pesaro (University Ca’ Foscari of Venice), Sabrina Rastelli (University Ca’ Foscari of Venice)
**Keywords:** Literature, Cinema, Arts, "Chinese narratives", "cultural dissemination", "cultural policy", "cultural production and reception", translation, "traditional culture"

**Giorgio Ceccarelli (Ca’ Foscari University of Venice)** – *Chinese Cinema in the Grey Zone: Navigating Governance, and Authorial Expression*
In Xi Jinping’s China, the political supervision of filmmaking has intensified not only through tighter regulations but also by means of a political discourse operating indirectly to compel filmmakers to engage in constant negotiation on highly arbitrary grounds. This paper investigates the strategies employed by certain directors to sidestep or mitigate the restrictions imposed by the current censorial dynamics. By examining several recent cases, it shows how filmmakers and production teams have sometimes managed to disseminate narratives that diverge from the official state line by intervening at the early stages of scriptwriting or editing, thereby reducing the risk of censorship and creating what we can describe as spaces of “discursive ambiguity”.
The works examined are, among others, Li Ruijun’s Return to Dust (2022), Lou Ye’s An Unfinished Film (2024), and the more recent Girls on Wire by Vivian Qu (2025). The trajectories of these films’ distribution, whether within China or abroad, highlight the precarious balance between authorial discourse and the necessity of reaching an audience that, unlike in the past, is increasingly conceived as a primarily domestic public. Within this framework, the “grey zone” emerges not merely as a constraint but as a productive device that compels filmmakers to maintain a constant inventiveness in navigating between the international showcases of film festivals and the Chinese national screens. Contemporary Chinese cinema thus reveals itself as a dynamic field of negotiation between expression and control, visibility and silence.
**Marco Fumian (University of Naples L’Orientale)** – *The Excellence of Chinese Traditional Culture and Contemporary Chinese Fiction: The Case of Xue Mo*
Since Xi Jinping’s rise to power, the call to revive the cultural “spirit” of the nation, and the effort to promote, in China and abroad, the “excellence of the Chinese traditional culture” have become central features of the official ideology of the PRC. Chinese writers, meanwhile, have been encouraged to tell authentic stories about China, its worldview, values, heritage and so on, in order to help foreign audiences to have more accurate understandings of the country.
Within this context, which literary and cultural works have successfully “gone out” to showcase this cultural

essence? To explore this, my presentation examines the career of Xue Mo (1963–), a local author from Western China who originally developed on the fringes of the mainstream Chinese literary movements. After an initial phase as a realist writer, he became well-versed in Mahamudra Buddhism and began writing both volumes on Buddhist spirituality and novels expressive of this spirituality. As I will argue, Xue Mo's rise from a peripheral figure to a successful cultural "guru" who now has a prominent presence at major international book fairs is the result of a multiplicity of factors, including the writer's own cultural inclinations, his savvy use of the market communication strategies, and the convergence between his "spiritualized" views of the Chinese traditional culture and the institutional ones which both see an essentialized "Chinese wisdom" as paths to bring peace and harmony in a Western-dominated world marked by greed and conflict.

**Nicoletta Pesaro (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)** – *(Un)Familiar Lexicon: Political Narratives and Literary Counter-narratives in Western Translations of Chinese Family Novels*

Family and its values are indeed pillars of the political and social theory of Xi Jinping, a tenet that dominates all official narratives coming from China and often aligning, as it was in traditional culture, with the nation. Continuously re-discussed in Twentieth-Century literature, the Chinese family and its vicissitudes are also the main theme of many novels translated into Western languages in the last decade, albeit with different perspectives compared to the previous century. It is not by chance therefore that the family novel genre, or at least the multigenerational structure, is so easily found by Western readers in Chinese fiction. In much contemporary fiction, from the root-seeking movement and the avant-garde to the new historical novel and neo-realistic works, up to well-known novels by Mo Yan, Yu Hua and Sheng Keyi, and even in more popular genres, such as science fiction and fantasy, Chinese society is represented both diachronically and synchronically through the lens of family. What this lens projects—and often distorts—is an image of restless and complicated existential conundrums. In my paper, I will analyse a corpus of Chinese novels translated into Western languages in the last decade using the tool of literary critical discourse analysis. I will argue that Chinese literature in translation reveals a complicated dialectic between official political narrative and literary counter- or sub-narratives, which, filtered by translation, most often ironically dismantle President Xi's explicit patriarchal and patriotic message.

**Sabrina Rastelli (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)** – *5000 years of Chinese Civilization: Traditional Art as Visual Politics for China's Image Abroad*

The article explores the evolving role and politicization of traditional Chinese art and archaeology across the Twentieth and early Twenty-First centuries, focusing specifically on how the People's Republic of China (PRC) has used cultural heritage and archaeological exhibitions as instruments of national identity construction and international diplomacy. The essay details the transformation of exhibition practices in Italy, tracing three distinct phases: the early displays (1980s-1990s) dominated by Chinese-curated collections, a golden age (2005-2010) marked by Italian-conceived, scientifically rigorous exhibitions enriched by sophisticated staging and curatorial autonomy, and a recent period post-2012 characterized by increased political oversight aligned with Xi Jinping's ideological agenda. This agenda foregrounds enduring themes such as China's 5,000-year uninterrupted civilization, multi-ethnic integration, and historical continuity, forming part of the broader "Chinese Dream" (Zhongguo Meng) discourse aimed at consolidating national pride and global influence. The text further highlights the political implications of recent exhibitions which emphasize themes like "unity in diversity" and the Belt and Road Initiative, positioning China's ancient cultural legacy as both a foundation for internal cohesion and a platform for international engagement.

It also critiques some contemporary exhibition practices for their commercialized, and at times inauthentic, presentation techniques. Overall, the document demonstrates the complex interplay between archaeology, art, cultural policy, and geopolitical strategy in shaping modern representations of Chinese cultural identity.

[406] Pei-Yin Lin (University of Hong Kong). *Modernism Disclaimed: Chiu Kang-chien's Works during the Cold War Years as Inter-Asian Cultural Flows.*

**Abstract.** Modernism in Taiwan has elicited mixed evaluations. Peng Rui-jin regarded it as a superficial Western transplant unlikely to be rooted, Chen Fang-ming considered it part of the U.S.-driven global anti-communist campaign, and Yvonne Chang viewed it as a Taiwan-concerned aesthetic response that challenged the increasingly stagnant middle-class mentality. Despite these valid views, scholarly attention to date has largely concentrated on the more canonical writers, with little consideration given to the inter-Asian context, particularly the cultural exchanges between Hong Kong and Taiwan. To redress this, this paper adopts Chiu Kang-chien (1940-2013), a China-born, Taiwan-and U.S.-educated modernist artist, as an entry point to explore the vibrant HK-Taiwan exchange from the 1960s to the early 1980s. Through close reading and contextual analysis, this three-part paper

first analyses Chiu's early poems, highlighting recurring themes of love and death during his time in Taiwan, and his subsequent shift towards socially engaged poems after relocating to Hong Kong. It then discusses his screenplay for the 1972 erotic film Intimate Confessions Of A Chinese Courtesan directed by Chor Yuen. Finally, it discusses Chiu's screenplay for Ann Hui's 1982 film Boat People, which concerns the aftermath of Vietnam's unification. This paper argues that themes of sex and death remain central to Chiu's work, serving as vehicles for his avant-garde aesthetics without totally neglecting audience entertainment. It also posits that reevaluations of Chiu's modernism during the Cold War should be situated within an inter-Asian context. Furthermore, Chiu's avant-garde endeavours were not necessarily devoid of political considerations.
**Keywords:** Chiu Kang-chien, HK-Taiwan exchange, Cultural cold war

[411] Yinfu Gao (Independent Performing Artist), Selina Kötter (Goethe University Frankfurt), Fengyi Sun (University of Zurich) and Yifan Dai (Goethe University Frankfurt). *Reconsidering Body in Modern Chinese Visual Culture: Aesthetics, Identity and Society.*

**Abstract.** Following the publication of Angela Zito and Tani E. Barlow's anthology Body, Subject and Power in China in 1994, topics concerning the body have attracted increased attention in the field of Chinese studies. Over the past century, the Chinese body has undergone significant transformations in tandem with the acceleration of Chinese modernity. At the dawn of the 20th century when the Chinese nation was taking shape, the body was imbued with revolutionary meaning through alterations to the hair and attire. Subsequent transformations can be exemplified by the militarized, gender-neutral bodies that typified the Cultural Revolution, to the cosmopolitan, gendered bodies of today. During this process, the representation of the Chinese body is embodied with heavy political and cultural interpretations in addition to its biological essence. This panel will concentrate on the representation and performance of the body in several Chinese visual cultural forms, including theatre performance, cinema, TV drama, and vestimentary practice. By investigating different aspects of the body culture, such as bodily gestures, movements, dress and decoration, as well as the life cycle from birth to death, we try to address the question of how the body is represented and performed in modern Chinese visual culture and how it is embodied politically and culturally. We believe that the various representations of the body are commensurate with dynamic political factors, evolving aesthetic trends, and the emergent identity problem in (post)socialist China, in the face of the challenges posed by globalization and modernity.
**Keywords:** Body Studies, Hanfu, Film and Television Studies, Chinese Theater, Aesthetics, Identity

**Yinfu Gao (Independent Performing Artist),** – *From Orchid Fingers to Clenched Fists: The Transformation of Female Figures from Chinese Xiqu to Model Play*

This presentation explores the semiotic and ideological transformation of female gestures on the Chinese stage, tracing a shift from the delicate "orchid fingers" of the Dan(female) role in traditional Chinese Xiqu to the firm clenched fists of the revolutionary women in the model plays (Yangbanxi) of the Cultural Revolution. Focusing on two canonical examples—The Red Detachment of Women and The Legend of the Red Lantern—I examine how bodily gestures, particularly the hands, reflect the reconfiguration of femininity in response to changing socio-political narratives. My study approaches this topic through the lens of performance studies and embodied practice. By learning the performance techniques of Dan(female) roles, observing and imitating the physical vocabulary of women in model play and reading theoretical and historical materials, I investigate how gestures function as carriers of ideology and cultural memory. The analysis focuses on how model play evolved from Chinese Xiqu reform and how the transformation of gestures—from the ornamental delicacy of orchid fingers to the militant strength of the clenched fist—mirrors the redefinition of the female image, from aestheticized virtue to revolutionary subjectivity. Through this focus on hand gestures and body language, the research offers insight into how political and aesthetic reforms intersect on the Chinese stage, revealing the embodied history of social transformation encoded within performance.

**Selina Kötter (Goethe University Frankfurt)** – *Conception, Pregnancy, Birth, and Death – Women in the Rear Palace*

Historical TV-Dramas, especially Qing-Dynasty palace-dramas (qingchao gongtingju) use terms like bizitang (birth control soup), hua/duotaiyao (abortion medicine), baotaiyao (preserving/stabilising fetus medicine), and hua/liutai (miscarriage) very commonly. This suggests the firm belief that at least Chinese nobility practiced active fertility control – especially the women in the rear palace (hougong). I suggest that the high rates of these terms serve as a reflection of the power struggles and hierarchical structures in the imperial palace and between women and men of the royal family and Chinese nobility – whether these depictions are historically accurate or to be attributed to contemporary sentiments and projections of themes and problematics, "it is always the female body that suffers

the most" (Lin 1994, 170). The aim of my research is to analyse the depictions of conceiving, pregnancy, and birth in the rear palace in Qing-dramas in terms of historicity, neo-liberalist feminism, and (re)presentations of the female body on screen. I connect birth with death and the long-established history of the aestheticized violence against women and the female death in literature and painting. Adding up to the literature of and about "alternative histor[ies] of women of power" (Zheng 2020), I challenge popular perspectives on current trends of 'strong female leads' in Chinese dramas and criticize their underlying adherence to dominating values of patriarchal family structures and views on birth, death and the inherent subjugation of women's bodies.

**Fengyi Sun (University of Zurich)** – *Between Spectacular and Departing: Bodies of the Female Knights-Errant on screen in the 21st century*

The female knight-errant, or nüxia, is a common character in Chinese martial arts (wuxia) narratives. Since the 1920s, there have been various cinematic adaptations of their narratives, with these productions maintaining continuous popularity up to the present day. Two notable examples of Chinese wuxia films featuring female knights-errant from the 21st century, House of Flying Daggers (2004) and The Assassin (2015) were directed by renowned filmmakers and received global acclaim. Set in the late Tang dynasty, these two films overturn the discourse of Chinese female knights-errant in previous wuxia films, reflecting the modern anxieties and concerns of filmmakers in a post-socialist, postmodern society facing globalization. The two protagonists, Mei and Nie Yinniang, embody new presentations of Chinese women on screen, combining traditional and modern characteristics. This paper will examine how the bodies of the two protagonists contribute to their portrayal and drive the plot development. I will focus on three aspects of the body: female sexuality, martial and dance choreography, and the denouement of the body. Other aspects including but not limited to bodily gestures, movements and decorations will also be addressed as required. The aim of this study is to posit that the newly mediated female body on screen reflects contemporary gender ideas and aesthetics in postmodern China. However, such newly represented nüxia bodies also imply the anxiety and bewilderment of society and its people in the face of unsettled historical problems and current uncertainties.

**Yifan Dai (Goethe University Frankfurt)** – *Dressing the Nation: Fashion Politics in Modern China*

What is Hanfu, literally meaning "Han-ethnic clothing"? Han is the majority ethnic group in contemporary mainland China, and Hanfu is a reconstructed ethno-symbol of Han ethnicity. As a nascent fashion trend powered by digital media and social media, the Hanfu movement has created a new visual imagination of the Chinese body. It began with a news report of a curiosity: on 22nd November 2003, Letian Wang, a young worker in the central Chinese province Henan, wore a suit of "Hanfu" seemingly out of a period drama and walked down a street in downtown Zhengzhou. Since then, a 20-year global Hanfu movement had begun, expanding from online to offline. By 2023, even casual observers visiting mainland Chinese museums, tourist attractions or downtown areas, would not fail to notice Hanfu wearers, distinctive for their archaistic clothing among the otherwise "normal" crowd in modern (Westernized) attire. Many local Hanfu societies have sprung up among Sinophone communities across the globe, hosting activities such as the Hanfu shows and festive gatherings.

Drawing on methods of ethnography and cultural memory studies, this study aims to provide an intimate while critical view on the Hanfu society from the perspective of a practitioner-cum-researcher. My investigation is primarily focused on the socio-ethnographical characters of the Hanfu communities, their identity pursuits, and the mechanisms that propelled the frenzied popularity of this fashion.

This presentation deconstructs the concept of Hanfu into its two dimensions of materiality and spirituality. It demonstrates how the transformation of the social value system is reflected in the institutionalised sartorial details of Hanfu. Through an ethno-symbolist lens, reviving the ethnic costume makes the Han ethnicity more accessible to its members and more visible to "others".

[413] Shibei Shen (Queen's University Belfast). *Street Trees and Urban Development in Modern Shanghai，1865-1949.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines the emergence of modern street trees in China and their integration into urban development. The street trees had first appeared in Shanghai's foreign concessions in the late 19th century and gradually entered Chinese-administered areas. This paper argues that street trees played a significant role in shaping modern China urban landscapes and public spaces.

Street trees in modern Shanghai formed new urban landscapes with new roads, houses, and parks; on the other hand, street trees might also have conflicted with existing or newly add objects and sometimes had to be removed or stolen. As Micah S. Muscolino viewed the army as a living organism, my research looked at the city as a living organism. Commercial species and environmental species coexisted within this organism, growing together while

also competing for resources. After Shanghai started planting street trees, their numbers grew rapidly until reaching a peak in the 1920s, after which they began to decline. The number trend of street trees might well have been a concrete manifestation of the cooperation and competition between these two species.
This paper is based on a close reading of archival materials held by the Shanghai Municipal Archives, especially the tree management records of the Shanghai Municipal Public Works Bureau. This paper aims to use urban environmental history to contribute to our understanding of competing visions of modern Shanghai while also offering valuable insights for contemporary urban environmental construction.
**Keywords:** modern China, modern Shanghai, street tree, environmental history, urban history, Sino-West interaction

[415] Ming-Zong Chen (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales), Ruoshui Liu (Science Po) and Ding-Yi Lee (New York University). *Law(s) and Natural Resource Management : From Late Imperial to Republican China.*

**Abstract.** Recent studies in Chinese environmental history have renewed attention to the role of the central state—whether active or marginal—in the management of natural resources, particularly forests and water systems, during the period covered by this panel. Diverging interpretations regarding the importance of the state's role suggest that resource management was shaped not only by bureaucratic structures but also by the material characteristics of the resources themselves. This panel examines the governance of two critical resources—forests and mines—during China's transition from imperial rule to the Republican period. On the one hand, it seeks to reintroduce into the discussion the often-overlooked roles played by local officials, jurists, and producers in managing these resources. On the other hand, it explores the new configurations that emerged among these actors in the context of the late Qing reforms and the growing presence of international knowledge and actors, as China moved toward the modern state. The panel is organized around two key thematic axes. First, it investigates the plurality of normative frameworks—ranging from state law to local customary rules—that coexisted in either collaboration or competition in the governance of resources. It also considers how the specific materiality of resources conditioned the regulatory chains governing their extraction, production, and exchange. Second, the panel explores how these normative frameworks evolved and how alliances among actors were reconfigured in the context of state transformation. From the late nineteenth century onward, the Qing state, under geopolitical pressure, sought to revitalize its institutions by adopting governance models from Western states, including approaches to natural resource management. This trend continued under the Republic of China, which inherited and pursued the ambition to modernize and centralize state control over natural resources. The three papers presented in this panel span this long period of transition, offering a shared reflection on the evolving role of both central and local administrations in resource management, and on the broader shifts in state rationality accompanying China's path toward modern governance.
**Keywords:** Law and Environment, Natural Resource, Frontier

**Ming-Zong Chen (EHEES)** – *What Institutional Regime for Forestry Sustainability in Qing China? A Reappraisal of the Interplay between State Law and Local Norms in the Qingshui Valley*
What kind of extractive regime did the Qing dynasty establish to mobilize the natural resources necessary for maintaining imperial order? How was this regime normalized by actors with unequal legal statuses and differentiated access to resources? And to what extent were concerns over scarcity integrated into this system through concrete institutional mechanisms? Focusing on the Qingshui River watershed in Guizhou—incorporated into a state-led timber extraction program supplying the Imperial Palace and Beijing—this study examines how actors operating at different scales collectively enabled long-term forest reservation. Recent scholarship (Miller, 2020; Zhang, 2021) highlights the private sector's role in ensuring forest sustainability, implicitly drawing on the classical model of centralized European forestry. These studies tend to marginalize the public sector—imperial officials and legal actors—within Qing forest governance. In dialogue with these perspectives, this research follows Brian Lander's work, emphasizing the state's formative role in shaping environmental regimes, and reconsiders the tension between public and private sectors in the Qingshui basin.
This shift in perspective brings into view actors often overlooked in merchant-centered accounts: bureaucratic agents from central and local administrations, as well as indigenous loggers, particularly among the Miao. By analyzing interactions among these actors, from remote forests to supply chains feeding the imperial capital, this study proposes a renewed framework for understanding Qing forest sustainability—one that re-integrates two crucial dimensions: imperial bureaucracy and indigenous producing societies.

**Ruoshui Liu (Sciences Po)** – *The politics of Yunnanese mineral trade, 1902-1911: how to work with the foreigners, and how to work against them?*
In 1902, the Qing government and the Anglo-French Mining Company, Syndicat du Yunnan, signed the mining agreement that gave the Syndicat a sixty-year monopoly to exploit non- operating mines in seven Yunnan prefectures. However, in 1911, nearly a decade after its signing, the Seven Prefecture Mining was abolished since the Syndicat's was not at all able to profit from the arrangement. Studies (Giersch, 2020; Shi, 2009) on the Yunnanese mineral trade in both the sinophone and anglophone worlds often take for granted that the neighboring Indochinese colony and its Kunming-Haiphong Railway allowed the French to exert considerable power on the Yunnanese economy. It is true that the occupation of Vietnam and the subsequent construction of the Kunming Haiphong Railway gave French merchants, investors, and politicians the prospects of enlarging French influence in China. In 1899, one year after the Qing and the French signed the preliminary agreement for railway and well before any construction began, French and British merchants have already formed the Syndicat du Yunnan, ready to exploit Yunnan's mineral resources. Through looking at the actions of the French-led Syndicat du Yunnan, this paper hopes to reveal how much power did the French really have in the Yunnanese mineral trade. This article looks at three land disputes between the Syndicat, the Qing state of various levels, and Yunnanese landowners. Takin place between 1907 and 1909, these case studies were results of the Syndicat's efforts to lease exploitable mining fields from private Chinese landowners. On the one hand, the three disputes illustrate modes of interactions between a ground-level foreign business representative, regular Yunnanese families, and local administration. On the other hand, these three disputes also show how local events play out in Qing and French diplomatic systems.
**Ding-Yi Lee (New York University)** – *Against the "Gold Diggers": The Legal Battle of Rights to the Maha Mine in the Late Qing*
How could a Qing official, with the traditional Chinese understanding of "contract, " manage to protect the mining rights against Western Powers in the setting of modern international law? In 1897, a Chinese engineer signed an agreement with a British firm, granting them the rights to the Maha Mine situated deep in the mountains of Sichuan. Three years later, the British Ambassador to China demanded that Kuijun (1841–1916), the provincial governor, enforce the deal. The latter argued that, as the Qing Code stipulated contracts to be entered into by an authorized official, this agreement did not meet the requirements. This argument convinced the ambassador and thus helped the Qing government secure the rights to its natural resources. With the case study, this paper seeks to question the relevance of not having a Western-style business law in the late Qing and the alleged implications. Undoubtedly, Qing law lacked certain legal terms deemed crucial in the West. Nevertheless, both legal systems possessed fundamental principles that could enable day-to-day commercial activities, which constituted a functioning structure for cross-cultural transactions. In fact, what Kuijun subtly invoked amounted to the "choice of law" (that Qing law should take jurisdiction when contracting natural resource extraction within China's territory) and the principles of "contract formation" (that the agreement should have been signed by an authorized party). In this light, this case raises an interesting epistemological question in legal history as to the degree that the mere existence or absence of terms really determines concepts and conceptualization.

[419] Wolfgang Behr (Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies (AOI), University of Zurich). *"I know this much is true": Old Chinese truth terms and the comparative morphology of ideas.*
**Abstract.** Conventional European wisdom engaged in alterity claims about China since the 18th c. holds that Early Chinese philosophy was uninterested in an abstract concept of truth in the propositional sense underlying correspondence theories since Aristotle in the "West". As this idea, reaching its well-known 20th c. incarnations in the work of Munro (1969), Hansen (1985), continues to be astonishingly influential, despite many attempts at refutation (e.g. in Roetz 1993, Harbsmeier 1999, Reding 2004 McLeod 2015 etc.) or mediation (e.g. Saunders 2022), the proposed paper looks into the linguistic prehistory of the pre-Qin spectrum of terms whose development mapped onto various philosophical dimensions (normative, semantic, logical, ontological) of truth through the lens of etymology. Offering case studies of the "linguistic morphology of ideas" (Mei Tsu-lin 1996) it then sets out to triangulate the observed lexicalisation processes within pre-Qin Chinese with similar prehistories reconstructed for truth terms in Ancient Greek (Krischer 1961, Starr 1979, Woleński 2004, Szaif 2005) and Babylonian (van de Mierop 2016). Special attention will be given to the role of negation operators in the construction of truth terms and the supposed necessity of sentencehood for "truth bearing".
Constructivist positions (e.g. in Lüshi chunqiu), which explore how truth claims vary across time or social contexts, and Daoist "dialetheism" which holds truth claims in suspension notwithstanding, the paper will assemble evidence from reconstructed morphology against the idea that Classical Chinese thought focuses exclusively on pragmatic

success or "appropriateness" of language, rather than logical veracity.
**Keywords:** truth terms, Old Chinese etymology, comparative morphology, conceptual history, comparative philosophy

[421] Tsui-Ling Huang (Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages). *Ethical Mediation and Human–AI Collaboration in Translating Sacred Heritage: A Field Study on Multilingual Interpretations of Mazu Qianshi in Southern Taiwan .*

**Abstract.** This study examines how generative AI reshapes ethical mediation, translational agency, and interpretive authority in the translation of sacred heritage, with particular attention to multilingual interpretations of Mazu qianshi in southern Taiwan. Drawing on translation studies, religious translation, and digital ethnography, the study investigates how human interpreters and AI systems co-construct meaning within ritual and communicative settings.

Based on fieldwork that includes participant observation and semi-structured interviews with three qianshi interpreters, two temple-affiliated AI developers, and ten worshippers, the analysis explores how interpretive legitimacy, trust, and ritual authority are negotiated across Chinese, English, and Spanish translations. The findings indicate show that while AI enhance the accessibility and translingual circulation of sacred texts, it also generates tensions surrounding semantic accuracy, cultural fidelity, and the redistribution of interpretive power.

This study proposes a triadic "AI system–interpreter–worshipper" dialogic framework that demonstrates how technological mediation reshapes ethical boundaries and interpretive responsibilities in sacred contexts. It argues that AI operates both as an instrumental tool and a quasi-agentive mediator, thereby challenging established hierarchies of interpretation within Mazu worship communities.

By foregrounding human–AI co-interpretation, this research contributes to ongoing debates on translational agency, mediated translation, religious translation, and the ethics of digital technologies. It offers new insights into how sacred heritage is translated, negotiated, and transformed in contemporary Taiwanese folk-religious settings amid rapidly intensifying technological mediation.

**Keywords:** generative AI, translational agency, interpretive authority, sacred heritage, digital ethnography

[424] Xiaoqiao Ling (Arizona State University). *Bodily Alterity as Object and Instrument of Knowledge.*

**Abstract.** This paper investigates a group of fu (poetic expositions) on pathological physical conditions from sixteenth-century China—such as "Fu on Pockmarks," "Fu on a Scabby Head," "Fu on a Blind Person," and "Fu on Big Nostrils"—found in a commercial imprint titled A Volume to Trigger Laughter (Kaijuan yixiao), attributed to Li Zhi (1527–1602), with commentary attributed to Tu Long (1543–1605). Composed by men of letters using pseudonyms that reflect a strong regional identity in the Jiangnan area of the lower Yangtze Delta (e.g., "A Carefree Scholar from Suzhou," "Student from Jinchang," "A Scholar from Goose Lake"), these fu pieces take abnormal bodily conditions as their subject while adopting the elevated rhetoric of the classical fu tradition to amuse and provoke. While the marginalized, ailing body is ostensibly an object of ridicule, it also becomes an instrument of knowledge—evoking region-specific flora and fauna, social customs, and historical precedents. By presenting pathological conditions that defy neat categorization, these texts construct a productive realm of alterity: one that, through the defamiliarization of embodied experience, mediates between everyday life and cultural memory. In doing so, they expand the epistemological and expressive possibilities of early modern discourse.

**Keywords:** Body as a site of knowledge, Pathology as alterity, Fu and rhetoric, Laughter

[425] Saheli Chattaraj (Somaiya Vidyavihar University). *Strategic Wisdom and Historical Memory: Sun Tzu, the Century of Humiliation, and the Shaping of Contemporary Chinese Foreign Policy.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines the influence of ancient Chinese philosophy, particularly Sun Tzu's The Art of War, on contemporary Chinese foreign policy. Key concepts such as "wu wei" (non-action), "shi" (strategic advantage), and "li" (the strategic use of force) underpin China's approach to global diplomacy, emphasizing subtlety, flexibility, and indirect methods in addressing geopolitical challenges. These philosophical principles shape China's response to territorial disputes, the Belt and Road Initiative, and its strategic competition with powers like the United States. In addition, this intellectual tradition has contributed to a decolonial shift in the study of Chinese international relations. Traditional Western frameworks, often rooted in liberalism or realism, are increasingly challenged by Chinese scholars advocating for indigenous approaches that better reflect China's historical context and strategic culture. Central to this shift is the legacy of the "Century of Humiliation" (1839–1949), a formative period of foreign subjugation and territorial loss that continues to inform China's political and foreign policy discourse. This historical

trauma fuels a strong desire for sovereignty, respect, and global influence guided by strategic resilience. By blending ancient philosophy with historical memory, China's foreign policy articulates a distinct vision for global engagement—one that rejects Western-dominated paradigms. This paper argues that the continued application of these philosophical principles will reshape both Chinese diplomacy and the academic study of international relations, providing an alternative framework for understanding global power dynamics in the 21st century.
**Keywords:** Chinese Foreign Policy, Sun Tzu, Century of Humiliation, Decolonial Approach, Strategic Philosophy, Chinese National Identity

[426] Shi-Ru Chen (National Taiwan Normal University), Hsiu-Mei Lo (National Chung Hsing University), Šárka Masárová (Charles University) and Mei-Tzu Tsai (National Cheng Kung University). 當代女性文學：地景意象與身體感知 *Contemporary Women's Literature (Last 50 Years): Landscape Imagery and Bodily Perception.*

**Abstract.** T 本小組探討當代女性文學，審視女作家如何借由移動經驗與身體感知來重塑自我，並挑戰社會規範。研究涵蓋近五十年的華語文學，結合細讀文本與文學史觀的分析視角。
第一部分聚焦旅遊書寫所凝聚的地景意象：其一比較三毛與蔡適任如何在遊記與旅居敘事中形塑臺灣文學的「撒哈拉意象」，其移動經驗反映女性在全球化與後殖民脈絡中面對他者的複雜情感；其二討論臺灣女作家的義大利行旅，無論將威尼斯視為居所與美食的延伸，或透過飲食書寫與文化他者對話，均以旅程開展了自我的定位。
第二部分回到文學史脈絡：其一，論改革開放後的大陸女詩人群像，她們透過抒情主體、文化環境或與異國相關的文化物件等，感知他者時也被視為他者，突破性別規訓，展現內在張力；其二，重讀 1990 年代後臺灣女同志與跨性別經典作，當身體跨界、情慾與親密關係已獲得合法可能性，跨世代讀者從「性別差異的自白」走向「慾望政治的批判」。
綜合而論，近五十年華語當代女性文學，展現女性在移動、身體與情感的多重主體性，不斷辨識自我與他者，並跨世代回應現實世界。這些作品與閱讀形塑新的觀看方式，女性經驗得以更複雜呈現。文學成為思索身份、權力與情感政治的重要場域。
This project investigates contemporary women's literature, examining how female writers draw on experiences of mobility and embodied perception to reconstruct the self and challenge social constraints. Spanning nearly fifty years of Sinophone literature, the study combines close textual reading with a literary-historical perspective.
The first part focuses on the landscape imagery crystallized through travel writing. The first section compares how Sanmao and Tsai Shih-jen construct the "Saharan imaginary" in Taiwanese literature through travelogues and narratives of dwelling abroad;their experiences of movement reveal the complex emotions women negotiate when facing the Other within globalized and postcolonial contexts. The second section discusses Taiwanese women writers'journeys to Italy. Whether portraying Venice as an "extension of home and cuisine" or engaging in culinary writing as a form of dialogue with cultural others, these writers use travel as a means to articulate their own self-positioning.
The second part returns to literary history. The third section examines the collective image of women poets in mainland China after the Reform and Opening-up period. Through their lyrical subjectivity, cultural environments, or culturally inflected objects associated with foreign places, they sense the Other even as they themselves are perceived as Other. In doing so, they break through gendered norms and display profound inner tensions. The fourth section rereads classic works of Taiwanese lesbian and transgender literature from the post-1990s period. As bodily border-crossing, desire, and intimate relationships gained legal and social possibility, cross-generational readers have moved from "confessional narratives of gender difference" toward a "critique of the politics of desire." Taken together, nearly fifty years of contemporary Sinophone women's literature reveal women's multiple subjectivities in movement, embodiment, and emotion. These works constantly identify and negotiate the self and the Other, responding across generations to the real world. Through writing and reading, new ways of seeing are formed, allowing women's experiences to be represented with greater complexity. Literature thus becomes a crucial arena for reflecting on identity, power, and the politics of emotion.
**Keywords:** contemporary women's literature 當代女性文學, Landscape Imagery 地景意象, Bodily Perception 身體感知

**Shi-Ru Chen (National Taiwan Normal University)** – *Rewriting the Sahara across Generations: Embodiment, Gender, and Cross-Cultural Perspectives in the Works of Taiwanese Women Writers Sanmao and Shih-Jen Tsai*
題目：跨世代重寫撒哈拉：臺灣女作家三毛與蔡適任作品中的身體、性別與跨文化視角

摘要：本文比較兩位臺灣女作家如何在不同歷史脈絡與移動經驗下，透過遊記與旅居書寫，形塑撒哈拉意象。三毛於 1970 年代前往西屬撒哈拉，她筆下的異國婚姻與沙漠生活, 在臺灣社會仍受出國管制的時代，掀起「撒哈拉風暴」。其書寫以浪漫情感與女性自我追尋為核心。相隔 30 年，蔡適任因參與摩洛哥人權組織而進入撒哈拉，與貝都因族夫婿定居當地，共同經營民宿與生態旅遊。她的作品重視在地生活與身體勞動，批判觀光式凝視，展現具有倫理意識與地方關懷的跨文化視角。
二者均以身體與性別的跨文化經驗，建構自我位置，撒哈拉成為反思自我與他者的重要場域。

This paper compares two Taiwanese women writers Sanmao 三毛 and Shih-Jen Tsai to examine how their distinct historical contexts and mobility experiences shaped representations of the Sahara in Taiwanese literature through travel writing and accounts of long-term residence. Sanmao 三毛 traveled to the former Spanish Sahara in the 1970s in pursuit of an ineffable longing. Writing at a time when overseas travel from Taiwan was tightly restricted, her depictions of cross-cultural marriage and desert life ignited a literary“Sahara fever.” Three decades later, Shih-Jen Tsai 蔡適任 entered the Sahara through her involvement with a Moroccan human rights organization and has resided in Merzouga since 2010, co-managing a guesthouse and eco-tourism enterprise with her Bedouin husband. Distinct from Sanmao’s romanticized representations of an exotic elsewhere, Tsai’s writings foreground bodily labor, everyday interactions with local communities, and critiques of the superficial tourist gaze. She articulates a cross-cultural perspective grounded in ethical awareness and sustained local engagement. Through cross-cultural experiences of the body and gender, women of different generations construct a sense of self, with the Sahara becoming an important space for reflecting on the relationship between self and other in Taiwan Literature.

**Hsiu-Mei Lo (National Chung Hsing University)** – *Female Travelers and Cultural Others: “Italian writing” by Women Writers Around the Millennium*

題目：女性旅者與文化他者—千禧年前後女作家的「義大利」書寫

摘要：現代女作家書寫義大利，最早始於晚清單士釐《歸潛記》七篇義大利文化散文，其後則有民初呂碧城《歐美漫遊錄》十五篇義大利散文及詩詞。而一九七十年代林文月〈翡冷翠在下雨〉也是知名篇章。本文以千禧年前後女作家的「義大利」書寫為主，以探討女性旅者與文化他者的對話。相關議題與文本有三部分，一是「女性旅者的自我追尋」，討論朱天心小說〈威尼斯之死〉與施叔青遊記小說《驅魔》，後者也是飲食書寫；二是「居所和美食是自我的延伸」，討論韓良憶《我的托斯卡尼度假屋》、李昂〈在威尼斯遇見伯爵〉、韓良露《義大利小城小日子》，均為居遊及飲食相關散文。三是「女子居遊與話畫威尼斯」，討論李黎《威尼斯畫記》與韓良憶《地址：威尼斯》，兩者皆為威尼斯之旅的散文。綜合以上幾位女作家對義大利的藝術文化與居所、飲食的書寫，以探討女性旅者在義大利深厚的文化薰染之下，如何與文化他者對話以塑造自我。

The earliest Italian writing by modern Women Writers began with Shan Shili's 單士釐 “ Guiqian Ji 歸潛記 ” in the Late Qing Dynasty, followed by Lü Bicheng 呂碧城 on Italy in her ”European and American Travelogue 歐美漫遊錄 ” in early Republican-era. This article focuses on the writings on Italy by female writers around the millennium, exploring the dialogue between female travelers and cultural others.The relevant topics and texts are divided into three parts. Firstly, “ The Self-Pursuit of Female Travelers”, which discusses Zhu Tianxin's 朱天心 novel
“ Death in Venice 威尼斯之死 ”and Shi Shuqing's 施叔青 travelogue novel
“ Exorcism 驅魔”, the latter which is also about food writing. Secondly, “ Dwelling and Food as Extensions of the Self, ”which discusses Han Liangyi's 韓良憶 “My Tuscan Holiday Home 我的托斯卡尼度假屋”, Li Ang's 李昂 “Meeting the Count in Venice 在威尼斯遇見伯爵”, and Han Lianglu's 韓良露“Small Days in an Italian Town 義大利小城小日子”, all of which are essays related to living, traveling and food. The third section, "Women's dwelling, travelling and painting about Venice," discusses Li Li's 李黎“A Record of Painting in Venice 威尼斯畫記” and Han Liangyi's 韓良憶 “Address: Venice 地址：威尼斯”, both of which are essays about their travels in Venice. By synthesizing the writings of these women writers on Italian art, culture, residences, and food, explores how female travelers, deeply influenced by Italian culture, engage in dialogue with other cultures to shape their own identities.

**Šárka Masárová (Charles University)** – *Gender and the Other: Representations of Foreign Cultures in Chinese Women’s Poetry since the 1980s*

題目：1980 年代以來中國女性詩歌中外國文化表现：性別與他者

摘要：本研究探討 1980 年代以來中國女性詩歌中「他者」的再現。研究焦點放在曾旅居或長期居住於歐洲、美國等地已離開中華人民共和國女詩人的作品。研究旨在探究女性抒情主體在感知「他者」時所具有的性別意涵，以及她們如何被視為「他者」。研究假設他者在作品中以多種方式被投射，例如透過抒情主體、文化環境，或與異國相關的文化物件等。在此脈絡下，本研究採用蘿拉・穆爾維 (Laura Mulvey) (視覺

快感與敘事電影〉(1975) 中提出的「女性凝視」(female gaze) 理論。儘管穆爾維的理論原本用於電影研究，但「女性凝視」的概念亦可應用於文學詮釋。採用細讀方法分析詩歌文本，此方法兼顧詩作的文本特徵與詩人的一般生平背景。值得注意的是，選取的詩作中相當大一部分具有自傳性質。預計將進行細讀分析的女性詩人包括：春樹、伊蕾、翟永明與張真。

The present study examines the representation of the Other in Chinese women's poetry since the 1980s. The focus of this study is on works by women poets who have either travelled or resided long-term outside the People's Republic of China (PRC), primarily in Europe or the USA. The objective of this study is to explore the gendered significance of female lyrical speakers in relation to their perception of the Other, and how they are perceived as the Other. The assumption is made that the Other can be projected in various ways in their works, such as through the lyrical speaker, the cultural environment, or cultural objects related to foreign countries. In this context, the theory of the female gaze, pioneered by Laura Mulvey in her seminal paper 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975), is employed. Although Mulvey's work focused on film theory, the concept of the female gaze can also be applied to literary interpretation. The close reading method is employed to analyse the poetry works. This approach considers both the objective textual features of the poems and the poets' general biographical backgrounds. It is important to note that a significant proportion of the selected poems are of an autobiographical nature. The following women poets are to be the subject of close analysis: Chun Shu 春樹, Yi Lei 伊蕾, Zhai Yongming 翟永明 and Zhang Zhen 張真.

**Mei-Tzu Tsai (National Cheng Kung University)** – *LGBTQ Literature in Taiwan (1990–2020): Shifts in Canonical Interpretation and the Transformation of "Women–Gender" Issues*

題目：LGBTQ 文學在台灣（1990-2020）：詮釋轉向與「女性－性別」議題的變化

摘要：1990 年代臺灣性別政治蓬勃興起，孕育了豐富的 LGBTQ 文學。

本文梳理此後三十年間的縱深發展：早期同志文學著重自我覺醒與認同建構，並與同志運動的興起緊密相連。這些作品探索身體的倫理與政治邊界，藉由文學想像「性別公民」的可能樣態。2019 年 5 月臺灣順利成為亞洲第一個同性婚姻合法的國家。合法化後，重新檢視 LGBTQ 文學，可見閱讀視野的轉變。新世代讀者閱讀邱妙津《鱷魚手記》(1994)，不再以迫切心態關注其中的同志情慾，反之視為一則在情感上近乎「恐怖情人」的故事。成英姝《男妲》(2007)書寫雙性身體，儘管故事背景是日治時期，但對於讀者，其性別的曖昧性在醫學檢證上仍應訴諸生理數據。此間身體邊界是被擴張還是被無視了？當書寫與閱讀從「性別差異的自白」走向「慾望政治的批判」，文學中性／別的流動展開了另種樣貌。

In the 1990s, gender politics in Taiwan flourished, nurturing a rich body of LGBTQ literature. This article traces its development over the subsequent three decades. Early classics of queer writing focused on self-awareness and identity formation, and were closely intertwined with the rise of queer activism. These works explored the ethical and political boundaries of the body, using literature to imagine new possibilities for "gendered citizenship." On May 2019, Taiwan became the first place in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage. Revisiting LGBTQ literature after legalization reveals a shift in reading perspectives. When new generations return to Qiu Miaojin's 邱妙津"Notes of a Crocodile 鱷魚手記", they no longer focus on the struggles of gender identity with the same urgency; instead, some interpret it as a story resembling an emotionally manipulative "toxic lover." In "Hermaphrodite 男妲", Chen Yingzhu 成英姝 writes about an intersex body in the Japanese colonial period, yet contemporary readers still expect the character's gender ambiguity to be resolved through medical verification and biological data. Are the boundaries of the body being expanded or ignored here? When writing and reading shift from 'confessions of gendered difference' to a critique of the politics of desire, the fluidity of sex/gender in literature unfolds in a different form.

[429] Aurélien Bellucci (Harvard University Asia Center). *People's Theater and Collective Memory in Taiwan.*

**Abstract.** Based on both fieldwork in Taipei's Treasure Hill Artist Village in the Winter 2024 (including qualitative interviews and performance analysis) and the translation of the troupe Assignment Theatre's new play, "裂縫" (Crack), this presentation will investigate the politics of collective memory in Taiwan today, with the civil war as a historical and topical backdrop. The Taiwanese troupe's work not only epitomizes a branch of Asian political theater that finds its roots in the May Fourth movement's street-corner plays (jietouju) or newspaper plays (huanbaoju), but also speaks to contemporary movements in world theater, in particular documentary theater, and to a variety of foreign traditions of people's theater. Through the study of the play's intertextual references to ancient Greek theater (Aeschylus's Oresteia) and German epic theater (Brecht's Mother Courage) and of performance analogies with Indian street theater and Japanese tent theater, the presentation will situate Assignment Theatre's Crack

within both a local tradition and a global movement of political arts and examine the ways in which it cracks the official narrative of local, sensitive historical events at once by resorting to people's memory and addressing civil wars in the world today.
**Keywords:** Huaju, People's theater, Collective memory, Civil war

[435] Eero Suoranta (University of Helsinki). *Waste and the Realities of Digital Capitalism: Chen Qiufan's Waste Tide as a Technonaturalist Novel.*

**Abstract.** In this paper, I put forth an argument for considering Chen Qiufan's (陈楸帆, b. 1981) ecological science fiction novel Waste Tide (荒潮, 2013) specifically as a work of technonaturalist speculative fiction. While Chen's output has often been characterized as "science fiction realism" (a term which he himself helped repopularize in China), the various broad and oftentimes vague definitions given to this concept significantly weaken its usefulness as an analytical tool. Instead, I approach Waste Tide as an example of what Esko Suoranta has termed technonaturalism, a mode of speculative fiction which addresses phenomena of digital capitalism. In my paper, I show how Waste Tide exhibits the three central features of the technonaturalist mode, which are: a focus on the material basis of digital connectivity; the defamiliarization of contemporary capitalism through the use of the language of capitalism itself; and the avoidance of straightforward utopian or dystopian resolutions. Based on my examination of these features, I argue that the novel affords to readers the contemplation of the realities of global capitalism, especially as they relate to the economic, social, and environmental inequalities within Chinese society and between China and the West. Through my analysis, I also aim to lay groundwork for further cross-cultural comparisons between Sino- and Anglophone speculative fiction as well as works in similar modes from other cultural backgrounds.
**Keywords:** science fiction, speculative fiction, technonaturalism, Chen Qiufan, digital capitalism

[438] Francesco Michael Scaringella (Università degli Studi di Milano). *An Analysis of English Textbooks for Chinese General Senior High Schools: Between Tradition and Innovation.*

**Abstract.** Although the status of the English language within the Chinese educational system has become a debated topic in recent years, the study of foreign languages – which in the vast majority of cases means English – remains one of the "three main subjects" (san zhuke 三主课) that also form the compulsory core of the gaokao 高考, the Chinese National College Entrance Examination (NCEE).
Given the crucial role of English in preparing students to sit the gaokao, this contribution focuses on Chinese general senior high schools and uses the English textbooks currently adopted in these schools as its main analytical tool. More specifically, the aim is to highlight an inherent inconsistency between the goals of the English language curriculum for general senior high schools and the nature of the tasks that make up the English section of the gaokao, which ultimately shape the teaching practice in schools.
As a result, the English textbooks currently used in China reflect a compromise between two major influences: on the one hand, the traditional Chinese teaching method, aligned with the structure of the gaokao; on the other, the Communicative Approach, particularly in the form of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which is the most widely adopted methodology worldwide. Furthermore, the qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with Chinese senior high school teachers explores their attitudes, beliefs, and preferences regarding English language teaching in China. In doing so, this contribution seeks to enrich the academic discussion on foreign language education in China from an interdisciplinary perspective.
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**Keywords:** Education, Foreign Language Teaching, gaozhong, gaokao, Textbooks

[439] Piotr Gibas (College of Charleston). *The "Curse of Chu" 詛楚文 and the Mechanics of Punishment in Early Chinese Historical Narrative.*

**Abstract.** This talk examines the similarities between an excavated inscription from the Warring States period (ca. 4th cent. BCE), knows as the "Curse of Chu" 詛楚文 and the "Harangues" Shi 誓 in the Shangshu 尚書. By tracing the links with other texts from the period, such as the Mozi 墨子 "Minggui" 明鬼 and the covenant texts in the

Zuozhuan 左傳, I demonstrate that early historical narrative in that formative period shared a similar structure and served the same function, which was primarily to pass judgements and mete out punishments and rewards. “The Curse” is a harangue, and Shangshu harangues are curses, but neither have been considered as such. In both types of texts, the speakers first narrate the history of the offence in order to justify their punitive actions against their adversaries. While the “Curse” summons spiritual forces to punish the offender, the rulers in Shangshu’s harangues assume the roles of spiritual beings—the ming gui 明鬼, or “punitive ghosts”—themselves, as can be deduced from other contemporary sources. The text by itself serves as a form of punishment: it exposes the wrongdoer to the posterity, gives him a bad name and puts on the wrong side of history.
**Keywords:** early China, historiography, historical narrative, ghosts and spirits, prediction, manuscripts, covenant texts, Zuozhuan, Shangshu, Mozi

[443] Bo Sørensen (University of Copenhagen), Michael O' Krent (Goethe University Frankfurt), Julius Kochan (University of Oxford), Chiara Cigarini (Ca' Foscari University of Venice) and Mingwei Song (Wellesley College). *Sinophone Hydric Speculations: Monstrous, Mythical, and Planetary Futures.*
**Abstract.** This panel examines Sinophone literary texts that imagine how water might reshape bodies, communities, and worlds. Sinophone writers use water to think across personal, environmental, planetary, and cosmic scales. Challenging the dominant paradigm of reading Sinophone literature primarily as expressions of local context, this panel looks at science fiction as a platform for transregional hydric speculation, grounded in concern about ecological, social, and existential futures in both their universal and culturally specific forms. Starting from Lu Xun’s early 20th-century embrace of the Promethean strand of science fiction, up to contemporary representations of monstrous futures affecting individuals, localized societies, or humanity at large, this panel explores monstrous hydric imaginaries that that intersect with discourses of personal and collective identity, such as ethnicity, nationhood, and gender and sexuality. Science fiction is here adopted as a vantage point to address the representation of catastrophic liquidities that appears at multiple scales—from the individual (as in Chi Ta-wei’s Membrane) and the social (Syaman Rapongan’s Eyes of the Sky), to the planetary environment (Han Song’s Red Ocean and Wu Ming-Yi’s The Man with the Compound Eyes), and the universe (Liu Cixin’s Three-Body trilogy). Especially in texts from the 1990s to the present, water emerges as a porous, yet material cultural matter imbued with preoccupations, hopes and anxieties, as authors respond to our time’s challenges of ecological collapse and climate change. Across these texts, water signifies ecological crisis at multiple scales: porous bodies under threat, communities reshaped by hydrological forces, and planets facing annihilation.
**Keywords:** Sinophone Literature, Science Fiction, Hydric Imaginaries

**Bo Sørensen (University of Copenhagen)** – *Liquid Monsters: Porous Personhood and Aquatic Transformation in Han Song's Hospital and Red Ocean*
This paper analyzes liquid monstrosity in Han Song's Hospital (2016) and Red Ocean (2004), arguing that these novels literalize distinctively Chinese ontologies of porous personhood while interrogating anxieties about bodily integrity, medical control, and environmental collapse. Where existing scholarship on Han Song emphasizes virtuality (Chen 2024), celebratory posthumanism (Wan 2025), or solid transformations (Wang 2022), this paper demonstrates how Han Song makes liquidity-itself monstrous through culturally specific frameworks. Drawing on the concept of porous personhood (Bunkenborg 2009)—bodies as fundamentally permeable, requiring careful regulation of boundary-crossing substances—the paper shows how Hospital's possessed protagonist and diseased sea dramatize catastrophic porosity. Applying Jeffrey Cohen's monster theory, the paper demonstrates how these liquid violations operate simultaneously across seven scales: geographic, atmospheric, architectural, collective, interpersonal, corporeal, and the nominal. The paper also discusses the gendered aspects of the oceanic imaginary in the two works, engaging Astrida Neimanis's hydrofeminism to argue that Han Song presents a “perverse hydrofeminism” where water is at once maternal and predatory, gestational but also hostile. Together, these novels reveal liquid monstrosity as distinctively Chinese interrogation of embodiment, permeability, and catastrophic transformation.
**Michael O'Krent (Goethe University Frankfurt)** – *On Water and Other States of Matter: Promethean Fluidity in Sinophone Science Fiction*
This paper examines how Sinophone science fiction uses water and its attendant meanings of liquidity and fluidity to imagine worlds in transition. Challenging the dominant paradigm of reading Sinophone literature as expressions of local context, this paper highlights transregional commonalities furnished by science fiction. In Taiwanese writer Chi Ta-wei’s “A Mermaid’s Tale” (1992) and The Membranes (1996), aquatic environments figure queer

embodiment as amphibious, at home in neither land nor sea. Malaysian-Chinese writer Li Zishu's microfiction "In Our Incomparably Clean City" (2017) juxtaposes a mysterious cleaning fluid with a complacent narrator who drinks tea as their city is disinfected, only for the narrator to disappear into the disinfectant. In mainland Chinese writer Liu Cixin's Three-Body trilogy (2006–2010), the "water droplet" weapon implicates states of matter beyond human comprehension that threaten planetary annihilation. For all of these authors, the liquidity of matter conveys the simultaneous awe, joy, and fear at a new world coming into being. In fact, this sublime theme originates with Lu Xun's embrace of the promethean strand of science fiction in the early 20th century. The possibility of creating life out of inert mud captivated Lu Xun in his translation of the science fiction story "The Art of Creating Humanity" (1905) as a symbol of the possibility of national renewal. This commonality suggests that fluidity is a central theme of modern Sinophone literary traditions.

**Chiara Cigarini (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)** – *The River Misses Its Old Roads: Indigenous Storytelling as Literary Reimagining of Water Policy in Taiwan*

This contribution builds on the interplay between water governance, Indigenous knowledge systems (e.g., Atayal, Tao, Bunun) and contemporary Taiwanese literary works. It begins by situating Taiwanese water management within the contry's complex history and focuses on literary works that treat rivers and other hydric natural elements not merely as symbols or resources, but as "mythical institutions" capable of promoting alternative approaches to technocratic and colonial strategies, by reintroducing an affective dimension which technocratic policy tends to remove. In these science fictional, fictional and non-fictional narratives, water-related affects circulate together with, or in alternative to, official institutional policies, thus creating complementary perspectives. The article addresses three examples in which water (policy) is directly or indirectly reimagined through Indigenous storytelling: Wu Ming-yi's The Man with Compound Eyes (2011), Apyang Imiq's Growing Up in a Tree Hollow (2021), and Syaman Rapongan's Eyes of the Sky (2012). These texts illustrate how indigenous and non-Indigenous literature from Taiwan reincorporates Indigenous teachings related to natural elements such as sea, rivers and typhoons, offering imaginative and affective approaches to water management that complement or critique official epistemologies.

**Julius Kochan (Oxford University)** – *Dystopian Skins in a Submarine World: Close Reading Chi Ta-wei's The Membranes*

This paper will focus on Taiwanese writer Chi Ta-wei's 1996 science-fiction novel The Membranes. It is set in a dystopian twenty-second century when the effects of climate change have rendered the surface of the earth uninhabitable and have forced humans to live under a dome beneath the sea. Living underneath this dome is the novel's protagonist, a dermatologist who carries out cosmetic procedures for wealthy clients. The text abounds in skins and membranes of various types: human, cyborg, submarine, vegetal, and artificial. Drawing on a growing body of critical work belonging to the emerging field of 'skin studies', this paper will examine descriptions of the novel's various skins and membranes to reveal the contours of Chi's particular dystopia. It is one characterised, firstly, by cosmetic fetishism, which is developed through the theme of dermatology, and also by alienation, for the people who populate the text's universe are estranged from each other and the natural world by cutaneous and submarine membranes respectively. Water plays a varied role in this novel of skins; whereas at some moments it functions like yet another membrane that divides, at others it represents what the membrane is lacking: liquidity and flow.

[445] Zixin Miao (Chinese University of Hong Kong). *The Village of Widows: Media, Memory, and Cross-Border Histories in Film and Museum.*

**Abstract.** On May 10, 1950, a branch of the Kuomintang (KMT) army departed mainland China for Taiwan, taking with them 147 men from a small coastal county called Tongbo in southeastern China, 91 of whom were already married. In the decades that followed, this minor and locally remembered historical event faded into the sweeping and grand historical narrative of modern China. It was not until the late 1980s that the story resurfaced in public discourse, and Tongbo began to be known as "The Village of Widows." Revisiting this event through its later cultural representations, this paper brings together two media articulations of this history: The Village of Widows (1989), a Hong Kong-China co-produced melodrama, and a state-funded memorial museum of the same name located in Tongbo. Drawing on an interdisciplinary approach informed by media materiality and cultural memory studies, and combining film analysis, production history, archival and field research, and media anthropology, this paper argues that while both film and museum commemorate the same historical event, they construct memory through distinct modes of material and affective mediation. By tracing the media-specific logics of remembrance, this paper further examines how cultural memory becomes a site of negotiation among political ideology, regional market forces, and vernacular histories across China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. In doing so, it demonstrates how a cross-media,

materialist approach can illuminate the layered politics of memory in post-Cold War East Asia.
**Keywords:** Cultural Memory, Media Materiality, Hong Kong–China Co-production, Post–Cold War East Asia

[447] Luigi Miotto (Ca' Foscari University of Venice). *Hidden Voices in Polyphonic Translation: Tomás Pereira, the "Lülü Zuanyao" 律呂纂要, and Chinese Cultural Intermediaries in the Introduction of European Music Theory in Late 17th-century China.*

**Abstract.** The introduction of European music theory to the Kangxi court has long been associated with the Portuguese Jesuit Tomás Pereira and his "Lülü Zuanyao" 律呂纂要 (LLZY, late 1680s), conventionally identified as the first Chinese work on European music. The present study challenges this “monophonic” narrative, arguing instead that the LLZY is a “polyphonic translation”: a collective, multilayered artifact, shaped by overlapping visible and invisible agents. Through a closer re-examination of historical sources (especially BnF MS Français 17420), this study redefines Pereira’s role from sole author to supervisor of the translation process and frames the LLZY as a metatext. Using the heuristic metaphor of “retro-genetic archaeology,” it treats the extant work as a “site of excavation,” using its rhetorical strategies and intertextual references to speculate on the nature of its lost prototext. Building on Translation Studies (Toury, Baker, Kovala) and Lydia Liu’s concept of “translingual practice,” it analyzes the extant Chinese metatext to foreground the “hidden voices” of Chinese cultural intermediaries. Finally, inspired by Latour’s interpretation of Actor-Network Theory, and through a philological analysis of extant versions of the work, the research paves the way to map the agency of these figures, demonstrating how they actively integrated European music into the Qing soundscape through terminological and ideological localization. Ultimately, based on these preliminary results, this study proposes a methodological shift and an alternative terminology to further investigate this work.
**Keywords:** polyphonic translation, Lülü Zuanyao 律呂纂要, cultural intermediaries, terminological localization, translingual practice

[448] Shuyuan Tian (University of Cologne). *The Representation and Meaning Construction of “Leftover Women” in Comic Illustrations.*

**Abstract.** The term “Leftover Women” (剩女) was first introduced by a Chinese magazine in 2006 to describe highly educated women who remain unmarried in their late twenties and beyond. As an artificially constructed concept, this word carries a clear subjective value judgment, and therefore becomes an important entry point for us to examine the expectations of contemporary Chinese society regarding the relationships between women, family, and marriage, as well as the situation of leftover women. While many researches have addressed the cultural implications of the term from sociological and philosophical perspectives, and explored its impact on targeted groups through communication and anthropological studies, how this concept was concretely constructed and circulated remains to be clarified. From its emergence in 2006 to its designation as a gender-discriminatory term by the All-China Women's Federation in 2017, newspapers and magazines served as key fields where this term was repeatedly defined and disseminated, where comic illustrations were the most frequently used form of expression besides textual discourse. Based on the cultural meanings associated with “Leftover Women,” this paper examines the character traits, drawing techniques, and narrative structures—between images and texts as well as among images themselves—found in illustrations published in newspapers and magazines during this period. It reveals how text and image cooperated to construct the concept of “Leftover Women,” and how related narrative strategies evolved over this time.
**Keywords:** Leftover Women, Media Representation, Gender Ideology, Comic, Illustration

[449] Agostino Sepe (Università di Trento (University of Trento, Italy)). *A Transition towards Prohibition – The Enactment of the Prohibition Policy in Early Qianlong Northern Manchuria.*

**Abstract.** In the fifth year of his reign (1740), the Qianlong Emperor of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) instituted what is commonly known as the "Prohibition Policy" for Manchuria. This policy forbade the civilian population (Chinese minren, Manchu irgen—predominantly of Han ethnicity) from migrating to the Manchu homeland. Furthermore, a series of regulations were established to limit the minren's exploitation of the region's resources, to the advantage of the Eight Banner members (C. qiren, M. gūsai urse).

However, by this time, the civilian population in Manchuria had already been growing significantly for at least half a century, and a civilian administration had previously been established in the region. Consequently, in addition to ongoing illegal migration, the Qing court was forced to contend with a substantial pre-existing civilian populace and its corresponding administrative structure.

This study focuses specifically on Northern Manchuria (present-day Jilin Province), where the civilian administration offices had been established less than two decades earlier by order of the Yongzheng Emperor, Qianlong's predecessor. In line with the new prohibition policy, Qianlong barred these organs from accepting new settlers and progressively weakened the civilian government's authority. Archival documents in Manchu and Chinese, preserved in Beijing and Taibei, reveal a highly complex process of decision-making and implementation, marked by conflicting interests not only between different ethnic groups and constituencies but also between the two separate government structures. This essay will detail this process and demonstrate its crucial role in the broader context of Manchuria's Prohibition Policy.
**Keywords:** Northern Manchuria, Prohibition Policy, Qianlong

[451] Silvia Ebner von Eschenbach (University of Munich (LMU)), Rongyuan Yang (University of Arizona), Chun Xu (Needham Inistitute, Cambridge) and Danxiu Chen (Zhejiang Agriculture and Forestry University, Hangzhou). *Perceptions of Production, Transport, and Processing of Grain: Between Staple Food and Connoisseurs' Beverages (Song to Qing).*

**Abstract.** The panel focuses on the various uses of grain as viewed from diverse perspectives. Being the major Chinese staple food, the production of grain was always threatened by environmental and man-made hazards. Fields were surveyed for the collection of taxes. While harvest shortages called for relief measures, grain yields were transported for government revenue and the supply of deficit regions and urban agglomerations. Despite being a staple food, rice also became an element of horticulture and was transformed into alcoholic beverages, indicative of cash-cropping and demand of refined consumption.
Four panellists contribute selected insights into the subject ranging from Song to Qing: Song governance issues of riziculture, comprising land survey, irrigation, and harvest reports, are addressed by n.n. N.n. examines a case study of the failure of governmental relief in face of food shortage of subsistence rice farmers in Qing North China from the perspective of moral economy. Also from the viewpoint of economic history, n.n. investigates the logistics of grain transports directed to the Southern Song capital for storage, consumption, and processing. N.n. explores the divergence in spatial clustering of crop cultivation and liquor production in Sichuan during the Ming and Qing from the perspective of historical geography.
**Keywords:** rice production, riziculture, multi-grain/single-grain, fields, agriculture, land survey, food shortages, transport logistics, rice processing, alcoholic beverages, rice consumption, geography

**Xu Chun (Needham Institute, Cambridge, U.K.)** – *Rationalities of the Wet: Riziculture and the Reconfiguration of Statecraft in Song China*
Riziculture posed a persistent challenge for many northern-based Sinitic empires, from the Qin through the Tang and later the Jurchen-Jin and Mongol-Yuan, whose administrative practices and fiscal regimes had long been intertwined–and, in many respects, co-constituted–with millet and wheat cultivation on the North China Plain. The expansion into southern, paddy zones necessitated wide-ranging administrative and technical adjustments: deadlines for harvest reporting and crop-failure assessments required revision; units of land measurement were replaced by calculations rooted in yield or seed input; and the hilly, water-saturated terrain demanded forms of labor and social organization that resisted imperial norms. At the same time, the wet-rice landscape also generated distinctive technological innovations in water management, irrigation, land surveying, and spatial coding, among others. Already under the Northern Song, rizicultural experiences in the South began to reshape political and administrative imaginaries via southern elites who now served the Kaifeng-based court, compelling the court to explore new directions in governance. Under the Southern Song, these riziculture-informed technical elements coalesced into new sociotechnical systems of statecraft that redefined the capacities and constraints of the state, further transformed its rationalities of rule, and articulated new political imaginaries.
**Rongyuan Yang (University of Arizona, U.S.)** – *From Grain Shortage to Rebellion: Moral Economy and the Failure of Relief in Nineteenth-Century North China*
This study examines the relationship among environmental pressure, grain shortage, and local rebellion in Caozhou Prefecture (曹州府) of North China during the Xianfeng–Tongzhi period, employing the analytical framework of moral economy. Moving beyond conventional interpretations that attribute rebellion to acute crises triggered by natural disasters, the article argues that in the impoverished region of Caozhou, short-term grain shortages alone were insufficient to produce collective action. What proved decisive was the cumulative transformation of grain scarcity into a structural condition, accompanied by the dual failure of state relief obligations and local mutual-aid institutions.

As environmental shocks repeatedly strained grain supply, the official granary and relief systems proved unable to stabilize access to subsistence, and local society's ethical expectations regarding the state's responsibility to nourish the people were continuously disappointed. At the same time, lineage networks, Baojia structures, and community-based aid mechanisms could no longer uphold a minimum subsistence threshold. This erosion of both state and communal moral economies created a vacuum of organizational authority, prompting local residents to turn toward secret societies, capable of offering alternative forms of protection, coordination, and mobilization. In this context, rebellion emerged as a means of renegotiating political and moral order. The Caozhou case therefore demonstrates that the rupture of moral economy offers a more compelling explanation for the mechanisms triggering late Qing local uprisings, and more broadly provides a new approach to understanding the interplay among state legitimacy, political ecology, and grain regimes in late imperial North China.

**Silvia Ebner Von Eschenbach (University of Munich)** – *Logistics of Demand and Supply: Rice Deliveries for the Southern Song Capital Lin'an / Hangzhou*

After the Jurchen conquest of North China and the relocation of the Song capital to Hangzhou in 1138, grain transports on the canals from the Yangzi Delta that had formerly supplied Kaifeng, went the other direction to the south. Gradually, more rice was also delivered from the wet-fields on the southeast coast, transshipped at the seaport of Dinghai, sent through the Zhedong Canal, and ferried across the Qiantang River to the rice markets, depots, and granaries of the new capital. Rice was mostly transported in convoys on boats of big tonnages, chartered from long-distance merchants, on seagoing vessels, but also on smaller ones, thus requiring transshipments. This paper investigates the logistics of how huge loads of rice and other cereals including horse fodder were shipped through Lin'an's water network from surplus regions in the flatlands of the Yangzi Delta and coastal Guangdong to meet the demands of the capital city's sharply increased residential population, its administrative personnel and the military stationed there with cavalry horses. The paper also looks into the demands of mountainous rice deficit regions in the capital's vicinity and how they were supplied with harvest yields from surplus regions. Thereby, diverse demands and uses of rice (e. g. nutrition; production of glues and alcoholic beverages; salaries, workmen`s and soldiers' pay) can be identified according to the specific qualities of rice available.

**Chen Danxiu (Zhejiang Agriculture and Forestry University, ZAFU)** – *Driving Mechanisms of the Divergence between Multi-Grain and Single-Grain Chinese Liquor in Southeastern Sichuan During the Ming and Qing Dynasties*

Southeastern Sichuan, a core region for traditional Chinese liquor production, exhibited significant spatial differentiation in distilling techniques during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Cities like Yibin dominated multi-grain distilled liquor (sorghum-rice blend), while Luzhou specialized in single-grain sorghum liquor. This intra-regional divergence holds considerable academic significance. Focusing on brewing raw materials, this study employs historical-geographical methods to analyze the roles of climatic changes, agricultural innovations, and policy interventions in shaping this divergence. Findings reveal that:1) extreme climate fluctuations promoted drought-resistant sorghum cultivation, while imperial policies restricting staple-grain liquor production accelerated the brewing material shift from rice/broomcorn millet（稻/黍）dominance to sorghum-centered production（高粱）, forming the Yibin-Luzhou pattern. 2) Rising demand for high-alcohol liquor further drove technological innovation from fermented to distilled techniques. 3) Yibin's mountainous terrain caused sorghum scarcity, and lenient local policies encouraged multi-grain blending. In contrast, Luzhou's plains enabled large-scale sorghum farming, fostering single-grain specialization. The spatial clustering of crop cultivation and liquor production reinforced this regional divergence, stabilizing long-term production patterns. This case reveals a multidimensional coupling mechanism of natural endowment, policy intervention, technological innovation, and cultural adaptation, offering a historical-geographical paradigm for understanding regional specialty industry evolution.

[453] Wangdeyue Qin (Asian Studies, University of British Columbia). *The Other of Landscape: Women and the Garden in Early Twentieth Century Shanghai.*

**Abstract.** What alternative histories emerge when we revisit the Chinese garden from a long-overdue gendered perspective? With the fall of China's imperial order, the garden was dismissed as a remnant of an elitist past, a flip image to the linear, progressive narratives championed by emerging modern public spaces. This project seeks to restore attention to women's reciprocal relationship with the garden, by proposing it as what Michel Foucault calls a "heterotopia" where ideal orders were imagined and alternative behaviours, relationships, and desires were enacted. Focusing on Liwalida cun, a privately-owned commercial garden in Republican Shanghai, this project examines reports, magazines, and photographs of garden parties attended by urban women who participated in various recreational activities. It offers a rare glimpse into what prominent discourses masked over — less

concerned with representations or social scripts, female participants consumed and appropriated the garden space through their own bodies, reducing a culturally coded landscape into a site of carnal pleasure for their own aesthetic expressions. This signified a subtle shift from the ideologically sanitized images of the "New Woman" towards a more free-flowing, autonomous appreciation of beauty and pleasure untethered from political discourses. The garden thus came to embody the city's precarious dynamics and an undercurrent of improvisation. By proposing new readings of a familiar cultural space, this study bridges the fields of garden and gender studies; it would further our understanding of the Republican field by asking what historical meaning may lie in what was perceived ephemerality beyond modernist paradigms.

**Keywords:** Chinese garden, Gendered space, Modernity, New Woman, Republican China

[455] Yanxi Luo (University of Edinburgh), Peter Smith (University of Oxford) and Frank Saunders Jr. (Hong Kong Chu Hai College). *Tracing the Dynamic Legacy of the Zhuangzi: Philosophical, Literary, and Interpretive Reconfigurations.*

**Abstract.** This panel explores the dynamic legacy of the Zhuangzi by examining how the text has been interpreted, recontextualised, and activated across different historical and intellectual contexts from early medieval scholarship and Song dynasty commentary to contemporary ethical theory. While previous studies have offered detailed accounts of how Zhuangzi was received in specific periods or by individual thinkers, they have often treated these engagements in isolation. By bringing together case studies from different interpretive frameworks, this panel highlights how the Zhuangzi has been repeatedly reworked to meet diverse philosophical, literary, and ideological needs.

The panel brings together three case studies that span a wide temporal range and draw on distinct methodological approaches. One paper examines how Ge Hong (283-343) employs the Zhuangzi selectively in his Baopuzi, reallocating its materials to support both religious and political arguments, while critiquing its cultural dominance. Another paper investigates Lin Xiyi (1193-1271) commentary in the Song dynasty, highlighting how attention to vocabulary, rhythm, and textual structure reshapes the Zhuangzi into a literary model of coherence and aesthetic power. The third paper engages the Zhuangzi through contemporary philosophical debates about meaningful life, showing how it offers an alternative framework not grounded in fixed goals or moral achievement.

Collectively, the panel shows how the Zhuangzi functions as a generative resource continually adapted to new intellectual concerns. Through close investigation to rhetorical strategies, historical contexts, and philosophical concerns, these studies trace the text's evolving roles as an object of critique, a model of literary style, and a catalyst for thought across time.

**Keywords:** Zhuangzi Reception, Textual Reuse, Literary Hermeneutics, Philosophical Reception, Intellectual History

**Yanxi Luo (University of Edinburgh)** – *Disassembling the Zhuangzi: Ge Hong's Selective Use of the Text in the Baopuzi*

Ge Hong (283-343) is often portrayed as a critic of the Zhuangzi, whose equalisation of life and death seems fundamentally incompatible with his own pursuit for transcendence. However, both the Inner and Outer Chapters of the Baopuzi contain numerous explicit and implicit references to the Zhuangzi. While previous scholarship has acknowledged Ge Hong's selective engagement with the Zhuangzi, little attention has been paid to the role of these Zhuangzi citations in the arguments of the Baopuzi.

This paper argues that Ge Hong strategically assigns different elements of the Zhuangzi to distinct argumentations in the Baopuzi. This analysis treats the Inner and Outer Chapters of the Baopuzi as a coherent and integrated whole, allowing for a unified account of Ge Hong's engagement with the Zhuangzi across the work. It identifies three modes of appropriation: 1) adopting Zhuangzi-style language to define the ideal lives of individual, especially seekers for transcendence and hermits; 2) employing Zhuangzi characters and anecdotes to articulate political and social claims; 3) criticising his contemporaries' excessive devotion to the Zhuangzi at the expense of Confucian and Legalist frameworks.

By mapping the distribution and function of these modes across the Baopuzi, this paper demonstrates that perceptions of the Zhuangzi in the early medieval intellectual sphere were shaped by a process of fragmentation and reassignment. Ge Hong's Baopuzi represents a crucial moment in the Zhuangzi's reception. It reveals how the text that was not fully accepted as a coherent doctrine could be instead disassembled, curated, and reintegrated into new argumentative contexts.

**Peter Smith (Oxford University)** – *Lin Xiyi and the Literary Dimensions of the Zhuangzi*

The reception of the Zhuangzi 莊子 has often focused on its philosophical insights or its place in Daoist thought,

yet its compelling literary qualities have also shaped its enduring appeal. This paper argues for the fundamental importance of literary features in reading and understanding the Zhuangzi. It highlights the pivotal contributions of the Song dynasty scholar Lin Xiyi 林希逸 (1193–1271), whose commentary is the first to consistently emphasise literary aspects of the text, for example, vocabulary, repetition, rhythm, and to consider their interpretive significance. This study examines Lin's method of identifying and analysing the literary features of the Zhuangzi, and his reasons for treating these elements as essential. Lin employs a distinctive critical vocabulary to convey his appreciation of the text's style. Rather than offering purely technical analysis, he uses terms such as qi 奇 (peculiar), guwu 鼓舞 (drumming and dancing), and shi 勢 (momentum/power) to articulate the subtle qualities of the writing and their effects on the reader. I propose that the impact of these literary features can be broadly understood in two ways: affective elements — such as tone and pacing — that shape the reader's experience and engagement; and elements that invite reflective attention, prompting readers to ponder the text's meaning for themselves. For Lin, the distinctive literary qualities of the Zhuangzi are crucial insofar as they stimulate a shift in the reader's perception. His commentary ultimately shows that appreciating these literary dimensions is essential for meaningful engagement with the Zhuangzi.

**Frank Saunders Jr. (Hong Kong Chu Hai College)** – *Zhuangzi and Meaning in Life*

Recent interpretations of the Zhuangzi have emphasized its ethical, epistemological, and metaphysical ideas, with comparatively less attention being given to its existential dimension pertaining to life's meaningfulness. Drawing on contemporary philosophical tools and careful textual analysis, the paper seeks to explore the Zhuangzi for insights into life's meaning for a contemporary audience. To do so, I first develop a minimalist characterization of "meaning in life" as distinct from morality and happiness. I then identify the Zhuangzi's central value, following the Way (dao), which serves as a transcendental condition for meaningfulness of all life. But although all lives of necessity participate in the Way and are thereby meaningful, to appreciate life's meaningfulness for oneself requires cultivating awareness of this participation. Reliable methods for doing so include perspective-expanding practices like meditation, dialogue, friendship, and the development of skill, among other practices, which reveal our place within the cosmic process. This framework resists elitist constraints on specifying worthy ends as a condition for meaningful living and embraces pluralism, suggesting that (almost) any activity can be meaningful if pursued with the right orientation toward the Way. Overall, I argue that the Zhuangzi offers a naturalistic, non-nihilistic, and existentially rich account of meaningfulness grounded in relational and attitudinal dimensions rather than in the pursuit of objective goods. I conclude by addressing challenges, including intuitively trivial or morally troubling cases and suggesting some potential Zhuangzian replies.

[458] Zhenyu Gao (Universidad de Salamanca, Facultad de Filología, Programa de Doctorado en Lenguas Modernas). *"人"字的概念映射及教学思考 Conceptual Mapping and Teaching Implications of the character "Rén" .*

**Abstract.** 本文立足汉字构形学，聚焦"人"字及其字族构件，探究其从具象形体到抽象构意的概念映射路径。研究通过溯源字形演变，界定该构件的构字层级与功能属性，阐明构意对词义的提示与制约机制。针对传统教学中字理阐释的模糊性与随意性，文章提出基于构形系统的科学识字路径，旨在矫正"望形生义""形义混淆"等认知偏差，通过强化教学的科学性与系统性，深化学习者对汉字表意规律的把握。

Drawing upon the theory of Chinese Character Orthography, this paper investigates the "Rén" character and its component family, exploring the conceptual mapping trajectory from its concrete form to its abstract structural meaning.

By tracing the evolution of the character form, the study defines the component's structural hierarchy and functional attributes and elucidates the mechanism by which its structural meaning prompts and constrains word meaning.

Addressing the fuzziness and arbitrariness in the explanation of character rationale in traditional teaching, the article proposes a scientific literacy path based on the orthographic system. This aims to correct cognitive biases such as "guessing meaning from form" and "form-meaning confusion", thereby enhancing the scientific rigor and systematicity of instruction, and deepening learners' grasp of the principles of Chinese character representation.

**Keywords:** 汉字构型学, "人"字族, 概念映射, 识字教学

[460] Yang Fu (National Taiwan University), Chi Hu (National Chung Cheng University), Wan Chun Chiu (Kyoto University) and Wing Yin See (KU Leuven). *Negotiating Sacred Authority through Ritual and Writing in Premodern China.*

**Abstract.** Religion has occupied a significant place in societies, and premodern China was no exception. Yet while

scholars have devoted much attention to religious practices, beliefs, and communities and have substantially contributed to the social history and philosophy of religion, relatively less attention has been paid to the dynamic interplay between the state and religion in premodern China. Existing scholarship has often centered on individual rulers and their religious policies, emphasizing how their actions influenced the ups and downs of religious groups/sects. This panel proposes a different angle. It argues that the formulation and appropriation of sacred authority lie at the heart of understanding state–religion relationship in premodern China, and that ritual and writing were crucial media through which actors negotiated sacred authority. The papers collectively explore how conceptions of sagehood and sacrifice structured early Chinese thinking about the interplay between the political and religious realms; how the written articulation of space in medieval China created and sustained sites of religio-political order; and how debates over Confucian orthodoxy in the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368) generated both religious and political ramifications. Crossing the boundaries of political, intellectual and literary history, the panel demonstrates that in the negotiation of sacred authority, ritual played an important role and figured prominently in writing, while writing functioned as a vehicle for ritualizing and legitimizing sacred order. Together, these studies illuminate and historicize such processes from early through medieval and into the middle periods of China, shedding fresh insights into state–religion relationship in premodern China.

**Keywords:** State, Religion, Ritual, Writing, Confucianism, Buddhism, Sacrifice, Space, Memory, Ideology, Early China, Medieval China, Middle Period China

**Yang Fu (National Taiwan University)** – *Sages and Sacrifice: Keys to an Understanding of State–Religion Interactions in Pre-Buddhist China*

How should we investigate the relationship between politics and religion in pre-Buddhist China? Drawing on existing scholarship and historical sources, this article argues that "the sage" and "sacrifice" constitute two key factors for understanding the political–religious nexus in early China, and that they continued to shape later reflections on state–religion relations. Prior to the Qin and Han, sacrificial practices already played a significant role in both governance and moral instruction. With the establishment of the Qin and Han empires, state sacrifices further integrated diverse religious traditions and placed increasing emphasis on the emperor's role within these practices. The centrality of the emperor in sacrifices also reflects the importance of the idea of the sage. In early Chinese political discourse, the sage carried unmistakable religious connotations: he was endowed with divine qualities and was capable of mediating between the human and spirit worlds. From the Qin–Han period onward, political authority increasingly relied on religious elements to construct the emperor's sagely virtue or sage-like persona, thereby bolstering imperial legitimacy. The intertwined development of sacrifice and the idea of the sage ultimately shaped the formation of the Confucian state in the Han dynasty. As a result, the Han and subsequent dynasties were characterized not only by their commitment to ritual and moral transformation, but also by a clear sense of sacredness and religious attributes—features that continued to inform state–religion relations even after the flourishing of Buddhism and Daoism.

**Chi Hu (National Chung Cheng University)** – *Battlefields and Sacred Sites: Spatial Reinterpretation in Six Dynasties Monastic Writings*

Scholarship on Southern Dynasties Buddhism has long emphasized source compilation, monastery geographies, and elite patronage. This paper redirects attention to urban land scarcity and introduces "spatial overlay" as a lens for reading monastic writings as part of the remaking of Jiankang's 建康 cityscape. Although building temples and pagodas was a meritorious Buddhist enterprise, in the capital's finite and exclusive land regime each new construction usually replaced an earlier site, opening a space for reworking landscape memory. Focusing on the Xinlin Fawang Monastery 新林法王寺 and the Tongtai Monastery 同泰寺 in the Liang Dynasty (502–557), respectively built on grounds of a former battlefield and penal institutions, this paper argues that such overlays functioned as political–religious acts of reinterpretation. While the Xinlin Fawang Monastery recoded memories of violence into a sacred site of renewed vows to protect the Dharma, thereby legitimizing the new dynasty through Buddhist claims of moral–cosmological transformation, The Tongtai Monastery converted carceral space into a Pure Land, symbolizing the redemptive transformation of the late–Qi political trauma into a vision of restored order and well-being under a Dharma–protecting monarch. As contemporary writings put, inscriptions were repeatedly activated in ritual, while ritual genres (records, hymns, encomia) continually re-narrated the monastery's past, enabling ongoing rehearsal of these memories. These cases show that Six Dynasties monasteries could function as politicized and historicized sites that reorganized memory and provided a symbolic framework for regime change and state–religion relations.

**Wan Chun Chiu (Kyoto University)** – *Narrative Politics and the Textual Remaking of Zhenji Monastery in the Sui Dynasty*

Founded in 583 CE, the Zhenji Monastery (真寂寺) soon developed into the main center of the Three Levels Teaching 三階教 after Xinxing 信行 was summoned to Changan. By emphasizing the Final Dharma age, promoting ascetic practices and universal veneration, opposing the recitation of Mahāyāna scriptures, and operating the large-scale Inexhaustible Storehouse 無盡藏 system, the Three Levels Teaching movement then aroused imperial suspicion and was repeatedly proscribed, revealing the pressures it faced from both the state and the Buddhist circle. Drawing on scriptural catalogues, the Xu gaoseng zhuan 續高僧傳, Mingbao ji 冥報記, and Fahua zhuanji 法華傳記, this paper examines how different genres reconstruct the image of the Zhenji Monastery. In these materials, the Zhenji Monastery is depicted as either a state–supported center inhabited by eminent monks, an arena of otherworldly efficacy with underworld journeys and miraculous responses, or a site involved in sectarian contestations. Through the lens of "narrative politics," this paper argues that the Zhenji Monastery was not a static historical site but a politico–religious arena continuously reshaped by genre–specific narrative agendas. Its shifting representations illuminate the multilayered religio–political dynamics of Sui–Tang Buddhism.

**Wing Yin See (KU Leuven)** – *Political Authority and Confucian Faith: Xu Heng and the Reconfiguration of Daotong in the Early Yuan*

The Confucius Temple was a site where the religious dimension of Confucianism intertwined with political authority in imperial China. The scholars canonized there reflected prevailing Confucian orthodoxy and the political ideology of the ruling elite. After Southern Song court officials canonized the several Daoxue (Learning of the Way) masters in 1241, a fundamental question concerning faith in Daotong (Transmission of the Way) remained unresolved: Could

the Way truly be transmitted from person to person, and if so, who was qualified to succeed Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) in this lineage? This issue took a new turn after the Yuan conquest of the Southern Song in the late 1270s. Southern Daoxue scholars in the early Yuan soon acquired information about the northern Daoxue community and Xu Heng 許衡 (1209–1281) as its leading figure. They quickly recognized Xu Heng's contribution to elevating the political status of Daoxue at the Yuan court. His canonization in the Confucius Temple in 1312 signaled the Yuan court's recognition of Xu as a legitimate transmitter of the Daotong, and this decision was thus largely acceptable to southern Daoxue Confucians as well. In this light, Xu Heng's canonization appears to have further weakened the earlier faith in master-disciple model of transmitting the Way, a shift that influenced later conceptions of Daotong. Through the case of Xu Heng's reception among southern Daoxue Confucians and his canonization, this paper demonstrates how conceptions of the religio-political Daotong in the early Yuan were inseparable from broader dynamics.

[467] Geng Song (University of Hong Kong). *Rewriting the Literati: The "New Scholar" in Chinese Online Fiction and the Platform Reimagination of History.*

**Abstract.** This paper uses the emergence of the "new scholar" in Chinese online fiction as a case study to examine how platform-based literature borrows from, reconfigures, and revitalizes cultural memory and historical imagination. Traditionally, the literati (shi) in Chinese cultural history have been represented as frail, exam-obsessed, pedantic, and narrowly oriented toward bureaucratic office. By contrast, online narratives selectively preserve the ethical core of the scholar—integrity and reverence for learning—while recombining it with a pragmatic, multi-competent habitus attuned to contemporary values and audience expectations. Protagonists import modern knowledge systems such as agronomy, physics, and market rationality into premodern settings; diversify their pursuits beyond officialdom to encompass rural education, pastoral self-cultivation, and the promotion of equity; and exhibit assertive, resistant dispositions rather than deferential endurance.

Framed through cultural translation and hybridity, remediation across media, and Bourdieu's theory of habitus and capital, this reconstruction exemplifies a vernacular "invention of tradition" in which online writers and readers collaboratively perform a temporal montage that sutures traditional symbolic repertoires to modern, neoliberal ethical horizons of self-worth and fairness. The participatory and algorithmic logics of digital platforms further shape these character formations, incentivizing figures who are both culturally legible and functionally adaptable. By tracing how online literature refashions a canonical cultural emblem into a hybrid agent of technocratic and entrepreneurial rationalities, the article illuminates the dynamics of "Sinophone classicism" in contemporary Chinese culture, demonstrating how historical icons are rearticulated to sustain resonance within a neoliberalized, media-saturated society.

**Keywords:** China, masculinity, scholars, Sinophone classicism, cultural memory, popular culture', Entrepreneurial self

[474] Elisa Levi Sabattini (Tel Aviv University). *Crafting Truth Through Dreams: Rhetoric and Power in Early Imperial China.*

**Abstract.** In this presentation, I examine how dreams functioned as powerful rhetorical devices in the construction of truth in early imperial China, using the Latin concept of evidentia as an analytical lens. While the term evidentia has no direct Chinese equivalent, its core function—the crafting of vividness, plausibility, and affective truth through textual strategies—aligns strikingly with the narrative techniques found in early and medieval Chinese historiography. By affective truth, I refer to truths that persuade not through factual verification, but through their emotional resonance and their ability to appear compelling and internally coherent to their audience.

Applying this framework to official court chronicles and dynastic histories, I argue that dreams were far from being mere reports of nocturnal visions. They operated as carefully constructed rhetorical instruments capable of validating political decisions, shaping moral judgment, and reinforcing imperial authority. The interpretation of dreams within these texts served to situate events within a cosmic framework, lending them inevitability, legitimacy, and moral weight.

By analyzing the narrative strategies through which dreams are recorded and interpreted, I show that official historiography in early China was not simply descriptive but performative. It actively participated in producing political reality. Dream narratives helped define what counted as truth, guided the reading of events, and oriented decision-making in the present. Through the lens of evidentia, the oneiric dimension of historiography emerges as a crucial mechanism for the construction, negotiation, and enactment of political power.

**Keywords:** Rhetoric, Early China, Dreams, Official History

[475] Ester Bianchi (University of Perugia), Eva Salerno (Catholic University of Paris) and Francesca Tarocco (Ca' Foscari University of Venice). *Religious Practices of the Chinese Diaspora in Italy: Historical and Ethnographic Perspectives.*

**Abstract.** This panel will look at three distinct case studies of Chinese diasporic religious practices in Italy. By embracing both historical and socio-anthropological approaches, it aims to contribute ethnographically rich examples to an as yet understudied and poorly understood topic. Most Chinese people in Italy identify as either Christian or Buddhist, an effect of the religious landscape of the regions where most of them emigrated from, namely, the city of Wenzhou—often described as "China's Jerusalem", and the region of Fujian, where many practice Daoism, Buddhism and various forms of so-called "popular religion". In short, while a substantial proportion of Chinese people living in Italy are affiliated with Evangelical churches, there are also significant numbers of Chinese Catholics, while quite a few also visit Buddhist temples during major holidays. Daoist practices exist in smaller temples devoted to local cults and popular religious practices. Finally, there are also members of Chinese new religious movements and organizations that are labelled as "heterodox" (xiejiao 邪教) by the Chinese government, including Falun Gong 法轮功. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many, in Italy and elsewhere, combine practices from different traditions, most notably Buddhist or Christian ones, alongside Daoist practices and those associated with Chinese popular religion.

**Keywords:** Chinese Diaspora., Religious Practices., Ethnographic Fieldwork.

**Ester Bianchi (University of Perugia)** – *The Longquan 龙泉 Temples in Italy. Local Functions of a Global Network*

According to statistical data from 2015, around forty-five percent of Chinese residents in Italy identified as Buddhist. While these figures may be subject to debate, the vitality of Chinese Buddhist temples in the country is evident and reflects a strong interest in religious practices connected to Chinese culture.

This presentation focuses on three previously unexplored Chinese Buddhist nunneries in Italy: Yueguangsi 月光寺 in Florence, Riguangsi 日光寺 in Naples, and Guangmingsi 光明寺 in Turin, founded in 2016, 2018, and 2024, respectively. These temples belong to the well-established Longquan network of Jilesi nuns in Europe. The nunneries mainly serve Chinese Buddhist migrant communities, providing a crucial presence particularly in Naples and Turin, where they are the only Chinese Buddhist sites. In Florence, Yueguangsi competes with two other Buddhist temples for religious rituals and meditation practice. All three venues regularly organize liturgies, death rites, and lamp offerings, as well as lectures on Buddhism that can be attended remotely. They also seek to establish connections with the local Italian population by creating WeChat accounts with Italian-language content, developing bilingual websites, and engaging Italian university classes. Attention will be given to the glocalizing and globalizing forces behind the establishment of the three nunneries, as well as to their multiple local functions: beyond their primary religious roles, they serve as sites of social encounter where Chinese identity is reinforced and social relationships cultivated, and as strategic platforms for cultural performance and negotiation with the

host Italian society.

**Eva Salerno (Catholic University of Paris)** – *Investigating the Biographical Trajectories of Chinese and Taiwanese Priests and Nuns in Italy and Europe: an Ethnography in Motion.*

In a historically Christian Europe, Catholicism served as the basis for structuring religious cultures and legacies that still shape the traditions of several countries today. In Italy, France and Germany, the establishment of Chinese Catholic communities clearly demonstrates that spiritual grafting has been able to take root in fertile soil. To support this process, priests and nuns have served as mediators and points of contact to facilitate acculturation. Whether they are leaders or members of Chinese communities, assigned to local parishes or training in Europe, these religious figures have had unique experiences that also reflect their societies of origin. Based on ethnographic research conducted over the past fifteen years in various Chinese parishes in Europe, this presentation aims to explore how the origins and trajectories of these clerics (whether they come from mainland China, Taiwan, or the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia) impact the daily life of the parishes in which they serve. We will also interrogate their religious education, particularly how it is provided by religious institutions in predominantly secular European countries. Through the study of the biographical paths of migration and mobility of these priests and nuns, as well as their use of new technologies within Chinese parishes, we will also analyse the transnational networks that are being created and that contribute to the continuity of these religious communities.

**Francesca Tarocco (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)** – *Performing Propaganda: Chinese Millenarian Ideas in the Italian Cyberscape*

By examining Falun gong's and Shen Yun's bilingual digital activism in Italy, this paper seeks to open up new opportunities and pathways for ethnography in cyber realms. It argues that the group tries to enact, both locally and globally, an alternative geopolitical discourse in which to envision a prosperous China without the CCP. Specifically, it looks at how millennial ideas have been successfully blended into FLG teachings and transformed into practices that radically challenge the status quo.

[476] Yidan Hu (University of Glasgow), Jiayou Liu (The Chinese University of Hong Kong), Yuhan Wang (the University of Hong Kong) and Jiayi Lu (The University of Hong Kong). *Reimagining China Across Borders: Sinographic Networks and Global Cultural Flows.*

**Abstract.** The four papers in this panel situate China within a transnational and cross-cultural milieu by examining its cultural exchanges with East Asia, Europe, and Southeast Asia, tracing the shifting role that China and Chinese culture have played over time within both the Sinographic and global spheres. Beginning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Liu Jiayou's paper sheds light on the dynamics between China and East Asia by investigating two divergent methods of interpreting Chinese texts in Japan and Korea—Tō'on Chokudoku (reading directly in Chinese) and Eonhae (rendering into the local vernacular)—as contrasting responses to the negotiation of cultural and linguistic proximity to China. Moving into the early twentieth century, when the balance of power between China and Japan had shifted, Wang Yuhan explores how Chinese writers appropriated Meiji-era Japanese knight-errant narratives (along with the image of the Russian nihilist) to reinvent a new form of xia in service of revolutionary agendas. The third paper, by Hu Yidan, turns to the cultural relationship between China and the British Empire by analysing Lytton Strachey's melodrama A Son of Heaven (1925), revealing how English writers imagined and represented the Orient within the imperial context. Finally, Lu Jiayi directs gaze at the Global South. By reexamining Liu Yichang's rural writing in Shanghai and Nanyang, this paper reveals the complexity of Liu's rural imagination and how his portrayal of urban Southeast Asia is influenced by his Chinese experiences and other factors. Offering broad chronological and geographical coverage, the papers in this panel aim to illuminate how China has both shaped and been shaped by cultural forces across the Sinographic sphere and the wider global cultural landscape.

**Keywords:** transnational, Sinographic, Chinese

**Jiayou Liu (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)** – *Eonhae(언해諺解) and Kundoku(訓読): Different Reception of Chinese Texts between Korea and Japan in 17th-18th Century*

In Yakubun Sentei 譯文筌蹄 by Ogyū Sorai(荻生徂徠, 1666-1728), he presented a viewpoint that is called "Tō'on Cyoddoku 唐音直読", namely reading Chinese texts directly in Chinese language. It reveals an interesting turning in Sorai's reading method of Chinese texts, and puts out a point that is directly against the long-standing reading tradition in Japan since 7th century, that is, the method of Kundoku(訓読), which enables Japanese elites to read Chinese texts in Japanese language with the help of some notions (Kunden 訓点). However, there is an inevitable obstacle that everyone except for Sorai cannot ignore, that is, the difficulty of learning Chinese. At the same time

in Korean peninsula, the Eonhaeseo 언해서諺解書, which has been a major way for Korean elites to read Chinese texts for around two hundred years, was showing some new features too. However, unlike Sorai's obsession on reading in Chinese, the Korean translation in Eonhaeseo was transforming from indirect translation to direct translation, which shows less explanation of Chinese. If we view "Ka'i Hentai 華夷変態" as a theoretical framework, we can find that whether it is Sorai's theory of "Tō'on Cyoddoku 唐音直読" or the direct translation of Korean Eonhaeseo, they are actually just different views on the same issue under the concept of "Ka'i Hentai 華夷変態".

**Yuhan Wang (The University of Hong Kong)** – *Reimagining Wuxia 武俠 Across Borders: Chen Jinghan's Knight-Errant Fiction and Its Meiji Roots*

This study revisits the late Qing knight-errant fiction of Chen Jinghan 陳景韓 (also known as Chen Lengxue 陳冷血, 1878–1965), including both his original short stories and his translated works featuring the Russian nihilist, many of which were published in New New Fiction 新新小說 (1904–1907) and later collected in his The Tales of the Knight-Errant 俠客談. The long-standing indigenous tradition of xia 俠 culture in China has led many scholars to view Chen's works merely as an extension of classical Chinese knight-errant narratives, rather than as a rupture or reinvention. Through close readings of his original and translated knight-errant stories, this paper argues that Chen's fiction is a transnational hybrid, shaped by traditional Chinese xia culture, Russian nihilism, and Meiji-era Japanese knight-errant fiction—particularly the works of Oshikawa Shunrō 押川春浪 (1876-1914), a prolific and versatile writer across genres, who coined the term wuxia/bukyō 武俠/武俠 and was widely read by Chinese intellectuals studying in Japan. As I will demonstrate, Chen's reimagining of the Chinese xia as a revolutionary fighter drew directly from Oshikawa Shunrō's formulation and was modelled on the figure of the Russian nihilist. Targeting primarily young readers, Chen used knight-errant fiction to advance his revolutionary agenda by promoting anarchistic consequentialism ("the ends justify the means"). His knight-errant fiction also played a formative role in inaugurating youth-oriented literature in modern China.

**Yidan Hu (University of Glasgow)** – *Modernism and the Decorative Mediation of China in A Son of Heaven*

In A Son of Heaven, a four-act melodrama set during the climactic days of the Boxer Rebellion, specifically on 14 and 15 August 1901 within the Winter Palace of the Qing imperial court, Lytton Strachey orchestrates a theatrical spectacle that ostensibly centres on the Chinese Empress Dowager Cixi. Beneath its surface of exoticised historical drama lies a deeper modernist intervention. In this context, "China" ceases to function as a subject in its own right and instead becomes a dramaturgical foil: a stylised surface onto which Strachey projects a critique of Victorian authority, imperial decorum, and sexual hypocrisy. The present research examines how A Son of Heaven constructs a theatrical counternarrative against Victorian orthodoxy by staging "China" as a symbolic medium of disruption. Through this iconoclastic appropriation of the Other, Strachey momentarily inhabits an alien positionality in order to unsettle the certainties of Englishness. Yet this pursuit 'to be modern' also entailed an aesthetic of the ineluctably foreign, in which China was woven into the fabric of the modernist discourse – and, paradoxically, was made to argue for a share in the very construction and aggrandisement of Orientalism. Thereby, the imagined East becomes both a site of resistance and a mirror of complicity, a critical tool that enables modernist self-fashioning while remaining entangled in imperial representational economies.

**Jiayi Lu (The University of Hong Kong)** – *From Shanghai to Nanyang: The Transregional Rural in Liu Yichang's novel*

This paper reexamines the understudied rural depictions in the works of Liu Yichang 劉以鬯 (1918–2018), a writer whose life and career spanned Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia. Renowned for his urban settings and mastery of New Sensation School 新感覺派 techniques, Liu's rural novels from the 1930s in Shanghai reveal an alternative stylistic trajectory, compared with his famous urban writing The Drunkard 酒徒, reflecting his early efforts to synthesize two divergent aesthetic currents within modern Chinese literature. After that, the rural theme disappeared from Liu's novels. While in the 1960s, following Liu's return to Hong Kong from Nanyang (South Seas), the rural landscape reemerged in his serialized newspaper novels. By comparing and analyzing the revisions and adaptations of the novel Jiao Feng Ye Yu 蕉風椰雨, this article explores how Liu navigated the demands of publishing within the U.S.-aided economic system while maintaining his aesthetic aspirations. Furthermore, it examines how Liu's Nanyang rural narratives integrate his earlier Shanghai experience while evolving to reflect a distinct Nanyang locality. By addressing these transregional dynamics, this paper provides critical insights into Liu's literary practice and contributes to a deeper understanding of the evolution of modern Chinese literature.

[481] Matteo Garbelli (Università di Napoli L'Orientale). *Beyond Binaries: Layers and Complexities in Zhang Zao's Poetry.*

**Abstract.** Zhang Zao 张枣 (1962-2010) was one of the most unique voices in contemporary poetry from China. He played a significant role in the vibrant activities of the Sichuan poetry scene in the 1980s, and subsequently relocated to Germany to pursue a Ph.D.: he spent more than a decade there, and went back to the PRC to teach classes at the turn of the century. His refined verse has received very little academic attention so far, and none in languages other than Chinese. As it often happens, such criticism has produced readings that focus on the Chineseness of Zhang's works, painting the picture of a literatus well-versed in the tradition of classical Chinese poetry, which he is said to skilfully combine with modern, and often 'Western', techniques. This paper complicates such picture. Through close readings of key poems and references to Zhang's theoretical writings, it demonstrates how his work, far from grafting 'Western' techniques onto Chinese roots, weaves a peculiar pattern which connects Chinese and non-Chinese, classical and modern in new and creative ways. Rather than 'integrating' traditions, Zhang re-semanticises them: he dismantles familiar tropes, reframes canonical stories, and situates classical references within the experience of displacement and modern fragmentation. Ultimately, the paper contends that Zhang Zao's significance lies not in reaffirming – or reviving – any specific tradition, but in forging a new, dynamic and performative poetics that is entirely his own and, as such, is way more future-oriented than it is concerned with the longing for a glorious, classical past.

**Keywords:** Chinese poetry, Zhang Zao, Chineseness

[483] Joey Yan (GSRL-CNRS), Erik Schicketanz (Kokugakuin University), Sakurako Komukai (Seikei University) and Felix Erdt (Modern History, Academia Sinica). *Contesting Moral Authority: The Search for a New Sociopolitical Order in Wartime Transnational Asia.*

**Abstract.** The protracted conflicts of the 1920s and 1940s, especially the years of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45), brought sociopolitical upheaval and mass violence to societies across Asia. Chinese intellectuals, politicians, and religious leaders—both men and women—engaged with religion in various ways to reconstruct ideas, narratives, and even symbols of moral authority during wartime. In this panel, we examine how politics, religion, and individual actors intersected to rebuild moral order. These conflicts were understood not merely as physical confrontations but as symptoms of a moral crisis. Restoring that moral order was therefore seen as essential for resolving violent conflicts.

The first two papers explore moral reconstruction rooted in traditional cosmological concepts and ritual practices, which lay at the heart of state-building projects in both Japanese-occupied areas and "Free China" under Nationalist control. The third and fourth papers shift the focus to the dissemination of morality and moral authority by individual actors. The former analyzes the making of the charismatic religious leader Duan Zhengyuan and the society built around him, which centered entirely on propagating morality in the 1920s and 1930s China. The latter paper offers a gendered perspective, examining how women assumed leading roles in relief work that transcended religious boundaries, state power structures, and ideological divides in the 1930s—from Guizhou to British Malaya. By examining the intersections of religion, politics, and social actors from multiple perspectives, this panel sheds new light on the violent conflicts of the 1920s to 1940s.

**Keywords:** Religion, Republican China, War

**Erik Schicketanz (Kokugakuin University)** – *Moral Reconstruction under Japanese Occupation: Ideology-Making in Wartime North China*

This paper examines the ideological underpinnings of the occupation state in North China during the Second Sino-Japanese War. It focuses on attempts to ground the state-building project that occurred under Japanese tutelage in a traditional (albeit not-purely Confucian) moral order, thus highlighting the importance of metaphysics for our understanding of the conflicts waged on the East Asian mainland during the 1930s and 1940s. While other scholars have discussed ideological production under Japanese rule in particular from the perspective of Japanese propaganda efforts (the so-called "thought war"), I see the attempt at moral reconstruction as part of a project that belongs to the collaborationist elites. Based on documents of the two northern collaborationist regimes – the Provisional Government of the Republic of China and the North China Political Council – the paper elucidates the overall worldview propagated by collaborationist elites and the concrete ways in which they went about realizing their project. In these documents, the "hearts and minds of the people" (minxin) emerges as a crucial battleground that would not only decide the outcome of the war, but the survival of the Chinese nation and even that of all of humanity. Further, this did not merely involve efforts to win the support of the people, but was crucially based on

the notion that hearts and minds had to be actively transformed to conform to the traditional cosmological order.

**Joey Yan (EPHE/PSL)** – *Of Rites and Warfare: Confucian Rituals in Wartime Sichuan*

Recent scholarship has shown that there was renewed interest by the modern Chinese state in Confucianism in the 1930s, particularly with regard to Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government's commitment to Confucian sacrifices. How did the generation of modernizing elites and militarists come to reconcile themselves to engaging in Confucian rites, given the prevailing views that were much influenced by the May Fourth movement, where Confucianism was explicitly targeted and deemed a hindrance to China's modernity? By presenting analyses of historical primary source materials, including archival documents, memoirs, newspapers, and Confucian liturgical manuals, this paper brings to light the Nationalist state's commitment to Confucian rites after its relocation to China's wartime capital, Chongqing, during the Second Sino-Japanese War. This commitment involved the government directly sponsoring and performing Confucian state sacrifices, as well as military and political elites seeking to bring about national renewal through their own engagement in internalized Confucian moral cultivation. All this constituted a significant part of the Nationalist state's effort to legitimize its authority and mobilize popular support during the wartime crisis.

**Felix Erdt (Academia Sinica)** – *Creating Sacral Authority in Republican China: The Personal Cult around Duan Zhengyuan*

In research on salvationist societies, the question arises as to how such groups created authority and legitimacy to attract a large membership, including high-ranking political and military figures. While the technical aspects of textual contributions and the relationship to the tradition of spirit writings are important, this paper focuses on the construction of personal cults around charismatic leaders, as illustrated by the case of Duan Zhengyuan and the Moral Learning Society. Unlike similar societies, the Moral Learning Society was deeply bound to the cult of its leader, Duan Zhengyuan, because other sources of authority, such as spirit writings, were officially banned within the society. Duan positioned himself as a spiritual leader endowed with extraordinary abilities, such as prophecy, healing, and the prevention of natural disasters, while actively seeking and successfully establishing connections with military leaders for his salvationist mission. Based on diary entries by Duan and other hagiographic accounts written by his followers, mostly in the 1920s–1930s, this study demonstrates how the salvationist mission of the Moral Learning Society was intimately tied to Duan's personal life narratives. It discusses the hagiographic stories about the founding of the society, its various encounters with military and political leaders, the plan to envision an international World Peace Prayer Conference, and Duan's eventual withdrawal from the society. The study highlights the important role of a charismatic leader and the cult constructed around him as key factors in the society's success.

**Sakurako Komukai (Seikei University)** – *Objects and Agents of Salvation: Women's Relief Activities in Redemptive Societies*

Since the nineteenth century, women have consistently been constructed as objects of discourse within Chinese religious movements. In the scriptures of the late Qing Xiantiandao, women were taught that personal salvation could be attained through the practice of Confucian virtues along with adherence to ascetic, world-renouncing precepts (such as long-term vegetarian fasting). This paper examines the place of women in Republican era redemptive societies by investigating the tensions between doctrinal views of women as the object of salvation and the activities of female members as active agents of salvation. It will do so by focusing on two female figures engaged in transnational activities, working across sectarian and political boundaries. Wen Zhengzhen was a nun in the Guigenmen lineage who founded a Buddhist Hall in Penang and traveled repeatedly between Guizhou and British Malaya during the 1930s, managing the hall together with female Chinese laborers in Malaya. Likewise, Zhou Zhilian, who oversaw childcare for the World Red Swastika Society in Chongqing during the 1930s, preached the teachings of the Dao Yuan while obtaining support from Communist Party members and overseas donors to rescue children orphaned by wartime devastation. These activities contrast with the passive place given to women in sectarian scriptures. Amid the intensifying social fragmentation brought about by imperialism and war in the 1930s, this study elucidates how women came to play leading roles in relief work that transcended religious boundaries, state power structures, and ideological conflicts.

[484] Xi Xu (Freie Universität Berlin). *Visual ci under Socialism: Negotiating Critique in 1940s–50s Manhua.*

**Abstract.** This paper re-examines the role of ci (critique) in China's socialist manhua (cartoons and comics) from the 1940s to the 1950s both as artistic agency historically enacted by intellectuals and as an admonitory function embedded in the works themselves. How, I ask, did the function and ideology of ci shift in response to institutional changes from the 1940s through the 1950s?

To answer that question, I look at four moments of domestically directed visual critique under Mao: the 1942 Yan'an

manhua exhibition; a 1951 controversy over Mi Gu's satire of meetings; the reconfiguration Manhua Monthly magazine between 1952 and 1953, and; the 1956 First National Manhua Exhibition. In each case, manhua targeted a fixed array of socialist vices, such as bureaucratism, formalism, and detachment from the masses. Over time, however, manhua's expressive visuality and aesthetic legitimacy shifted with changing sociopolitical agendas. Thus what had been encouraged in the early 1940s as ci-style ethical critique, aligned with Confucian moral admonition, was later reframed by Marxism to privilege class struggle, ideological clarity, and temporal discipline. These shifts turned manhua into an experimental arena where cartoonists navigated the constraints and possibilities of visual style, political timing, and genre inheritance, often negotiating not just how to express criticism, but when and under what ideological terms. By comparing works from across the four moments listed above, I show how manhua appropriated resources from classical texts and folk forms to internationalist socialist styles and domestic political campaigns to create constrained yet generative spaces for critique.
**Keywords:** Socialist manhua, Visual critique (ci), Mao-era cultural politics, Institutional transformation, Satire and admonition, 1940s–1950s China

[485] Thomas Crone (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg). *Tracing the Origins of Textual Criticism in Early China.*
**Abstract.** While many of the methodological and theoretical assumptions of textual criticism today are of distinctively modern origin, rudimentary forms of this practice can be traced back several millennia across various textual cultures. This talk argues that the case of textual criticism in early China, referred to as the "comparing" (jiao 校) and "checking" (chou 讎) of texts, offers insights that both parallel and diverge from hypotheses regarding the emergence of textual criticism in other ancient traditions. By combining evidence from the received literary corpus with that provided by excavated manuscripts, I reconstruct the various political, material, and intellectual factors that led to the rise of textual criticism during the Qin and Han empires and track its development throughout the centuries. Specifically, I focus on the underlying conceptual parameters and purpose of jiao and chou, showing how they diverge from modern practices. Ultimately, I aim to demonstrate how these concepts allow us to gain a more nuanced understanding of the editorial filters through which famous and influential texts, such as the Confucian Classics and Masters literature, were formed and transmitted.
**Keywords:** Textual Criticism, Early China, Excavated Manuscripts, Philology, Collation (Jiao 校 and Chou 讎)

[488] Kailing Xie (University of Birmingham) and Zhou Yunyun (Queen Mary, University of London). *Tokophobia as Feminist Resistance? Female Netizens' Reproductive Experiences and Discourses in China's Cyberspace.*
**Abstract.** 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.
**Keywords:** Feminism, gender, contemporary China

[490] Xin Wu (Renmin University of China). *Morality on Script, Sensuality on Stage: The Duality of "Saozi wo" Operas.*
**Abstract.** Chen Moxiang 陈墨香, a renowned Peking Opera playwright, first proposed the concept of "Saozi wo" operas 嫂子我戏 ("I, Sister-in-Law" operas) in his drama reviews. These plays share striking similarities in both plot and performance, centering on eroticism and violence, usually being categorized as "Yinsha" operas 淫杀戏

("Sensual Murder" operas), such as Ma Siyuan 马思远, Double Nail Record 双钉记, and Battle of Wan City 战宛城. In his novels, Chen Moxiang strongly advocated that the characters who exhibited moral transgressions in such plays ultimately faced punishments, thus serving an educational purpose by warning against lust and violence. However, these plays have long been criticized by mainstream public opinion and have been repeatedly banned across different historical periods on the grounds that they promoted sexual misconduct and violence. The reason for this paradoxical phenomenon lies in the fact that Chen Moxiang, based on the script texts, argued that such plays, through their overarching narratives advocating karmic retribution, could have a positive social impact. Yet, in actual performances, the erotic and violent elements in "Saozi wo" operas were so vividly and intuitively portrayed on stage that they possessed a powerful appeal. As a result, the "encouragement" of lust and violence through stage performance undermines the "warning" conveyed by the script's narratives, which is the fundamental reason why these plays have been repeatedly banned and destroyed.
**Keywords:** Peking Opera, Saozi wo operas, Yinsha operas, Chen Moxiang, text, stage performance

[492] Yuchen Liou (Ghent University/ National Chengchi University), Yurui Zhao (Ghent University / Renmin University of China), Jiahang Yu (Ghent University), Wenzhuo Shi (Ghent University) and Pi-Fen Chung (Hua Fan University). *Multi-Dimensional Interactions in Medieval Chinese Religion: Practices and Social Precarity.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines, with four case studies, how religious communities in medievalChina used ritual practices to confront crises and social precarity, and how thesepractices were reshaped by the concerns of the people who relied on them.The first case treats "Prosecution from the Grave" as a significant cultural practice infourth- to sixth-century southern China, examining its social and cultural functionswithin the dynamic interactions between Daoist practice and social realities. The secondcase examines how the Northern Liang ruler Juqu Mengxun strategically employedrituals and religious practices to consolidate and legitimize his authority in the Hexiregion; the study reveals how such practices enabled regional rulers to engage withlocal traditions. The third case examines materials from the Dunhuang manuscriptsrelated to deceased animals to explore how Buddhist ideas shaped Dunhuang's uniquewritings on animals, revealing how local religious practices addressed moral anxietyand karmic fear through acts of redemption. The final case analyzes how astrologyprovided a shared ritual framework that allowed Buddhist and Daoist traditions toaddress social precarity in the Tang–Song period.These four cases highlight the close ties between religion and society and show howreligious practices were continually reshaped by social conditions and communityneeds. They demonstrate how different traditions reinterpreted their meanings andadjusted their methods to respond to changing forms of uncertainty and crisis.
**Keywords:** Medieval China, Religious Practice, Social Precarity

**Yurui Zhao (Ghent University / Renmin University of China)** – *"Prosecution from the Grave" as Cultural Practice: A New Inquiry into Six Dynasties Society through the Zhen'gao*

"Prosecution from the Grave" (zhongsong 冢訟) is a distinctive religious-cultural practice in China, denoting cases in which the dead lodge accusations against the living before netherworld officials, causing misfortune upon the living. First attested in the fourth-century Daoist scripture Zhen'gao (Declarations of the Perfected 真誥), the text repeatedly depicts Xu Mi 許謐 (305–376)—a literatus and practitioner of the Shangqing 上清 school?. His family was repeatedly involved in such cases and assisted others resolve them. Whereas previous studies focused on the underworld notions it embodies or on shifts in its content and rituals, this article approaches "Prosecution from the Grave" as a significant cultural practice in fourth-to sixth-century southern China, exploring its social and cultural functions within religious engagement with social needs. "Prosecution from the Grave" reflects Six Dynasties (222–589) beliefs in ghosts and fengshui, and flourished as a cultural practice rooted in intellectual traditions and social needs. Compared with "Ghost affliction" (guizhu 鬼註) and "Underworld prosecution" (mingsong 冥訟), it exhibits greater immediacy and a distinct expiatory orientation. Amid political upheaval and shifting social structures, it provided emotional solace to northern migrants and local southern communities. Xu Mi employed "Prosecution from the Grave" to manage internal affairs, mediate conflicts with elite families, and consolidate the Shangqing's religious authority and social standing. Taken together, "Prosecution from the Grave" as a cultural practice exhibits distinctive meanings and functions, reflecting the emotional needs and power dynamics of individuals and families in Six Dynasties society.

**Wenzhuo Shi (Ghent University)** – *Buddhism, Local Cults, and Edicts of Self-Punishment: Juqu Mengxun's Narratives of the Throne*

The paper focuses on how Juqu Mengxun, the founding ruler of the Northern Liang kingdom (397–460), employed

various rituals and religious practices to strengthen his reign. By examining the historical records of Northern Liang, relevant Buddhist texts and archeological evidence, the paper argues that as a non-Han ruler who rose during the period of the Sixteen Kingdoms, Mengxun narrated himself as a rightful king through affiliating his reign with multiple cultural traditions, including Buddhism, worship of regional mountains, the cult of Queen Mother of the West, and traditional Han culture. While previous scholarship emphasizes whether Mengxun was a pious Buddhist devotee, this paper looks at Mengxun's support of Buddhism together with his affiliations with other cults and traditions and argues that all these rituals and religious practices fulfilled his demand to consolidate power. The paper first gives an overview of the political and historical status of the Hexi Corridor in the beginning of the 5th century and demonstrates the need for Mengxun to legitimize his rule and to gain support from a community with multi-ethnic backgrounds; it then discusses the rising influence of court Buddhism of the time and how Mengxun incorporated the religion into his reign. Finally, the paper highlights how the worship of local cults and religious practices from Han tradition associated him with former Han rulers. Mengxun's engagement with Buddhism and diverse ritual practices offers insights on how the non-Han.

**Jiahang Yu (Ghent University)** – *Animal Redemption in Dunhuang Manuscripts: Concepts of Karma and Rebirth in Buddhist Belief*

The Dunhuang manuscripts preserve a distinctive category of writings centered on animals. Influenced by Buddhist concepts of karma and rebirth, these writings regard animals as sentient beings within the six realms of existence, capable of experiencing suffering and karmic retribution. Guided by this belief, animals that died from slaughter or illness could still accrue merit through religious acts, such as transcendental rituals or copying sutras to attain rebirth in a more favorable realm. This paper examines animal-related materials from the Dunhuang manuscripts, including mourning texts, prayers for releasing animals, and so on, to investigate how Buddhist belief shaped this unique form of animal writing and the broader idea of animal redemption. The paper first considers the social context that produced these texts, revealing how the people of Dunhuang integrated animals into a moral and religious system. Then, by analyzing the structure, language features, and emotional expressions of these writings, the paper shows how people sought to accumulate merit for deceased animals through writing, life release, and other practices, while also mitigating their own karmic consequences from using, slaughtering, or consumption of animals. Furthermore, the study explores how the social functions of animals informed donors' redemptive practices, revealing that different animals were accorded distinct emotional and practical values according to their roles in human life. By examining these manuscripts within the broader social and religious context of Dunhuang, this paper illuminates both the local characteristics of Dunhuang Buddhism and how religious belief reshapes the emotional bonds between humans and animals.

**Yuchen Liou (Ghent University/ National Chengchi University)** – *Astral Symbols and Social Precarity in Tang Song China: Cross Tradition Responses to Calamity*

Although astrology is often discussed in relation to state ideology, its role as a shared symbolic language linking the emperor, ritual specialists, and local communities has received far less attention. In the Tang Song period, repeated natural disasters and warfare created widespread insecurity and increased the need for effective ways to avert misfortune. In this context, astrology became a common framework through which religious traditions interpreted disasters and proposed protective practices.

This study examines the use of astrology in calamity-averting practices in two ritual traditions: the Tejaprabhā Buddha (Chishengguangfo 熾盛光佛) rites in Esoteric Buddhism and the Daoist Lunar Apogee Magic (Yuebei fa 月孛法) ritual. Although their structures differ, both relied on astrology as a shared basis for explaining calamities and authorizing protective actions. The texts show that astral symbols played a central role in ritual performance, particularly in building altars and conducting offerings and invocations. These symbols shaped the diagnosis of misfortune and guided protective measures, enabling the rites to circulate among the emperor, ritual specialists, and local communities.

This study further analyzes how each text incorporates astral ideas into its ritual framework and how astrology allowed ritual specialists to engage different social groups and assert authority. This approach highlights astrology as a shared medium that reshaped ritual responses to calamity in the Tang Song period. In sum, this study shows how astral symbolism shaped the ways Buddhist and Daoist specialists interpreted calamity and formulated protective responses in the Tang Song period.

[493] Xiaobin Yang (ACADEMIA SINICA). *The Floating/Empty Signifier and the Heterotopia of Language: Anti-Discursive Performance in Taiwan New-Generation Poetry.*

**Abstract.** "New-generation" poets, born in the 1980s and the 1990s, have recently emerged as a major

phenomenon in Taiwan's literary world. This paper examines, based on Derridean, Lacanian and Laclauan theoretical perspectives, the aesthetic trends of the new-generation poetry. In response to the culturo-political discourses, which construct social structures based on hollow symbols, new-generation poetry tends to play with language that does not contains actual, substantial "contents." The awareness of the predominance of language pushes innovative or even rebellious language experiment to the forefront of writing in order to reject instrumentalization or decoration of language. New-generation poetry creates metonymic games that are fundamentally self-disruptive, probing the impossible within the Lacanian symbolic Other. Herein lies the tendency to exhibit a linguistic heterotopia to replace the monolithic social utopia. The paper will examine the rhetoric characteristics of the poetic texts to reveal the distinctive forms of new-generation poetry. Besides the formalistic analysis, it will also investigate the sociocultural implications by observing how the new lyrical subject occupies a position divergent from the dominant discourses. I will discuss and analyze poems by Ye Mimi, Yu Ji, Chen Boyu, You Shanjun, Zheng Jie, Zhuxue Deren, Zhan Jiaxin, Wang Li, Xu Peihuang, among others.
**Keywords:** Taiwan Poetry, New-Generation Poets, Linguistic Heterotopia, Floating/Empty Signifier

[494] Sebastian Eicher (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), Sabine Weber (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg), Rania Huntington (University of Wisconsin-Madison) and Roland Altenburger (Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg). *Between Wonder and Unease: Narrating Change in Late Qing and Early Republican China.*

**Abstract.** Late Qing and early Republican narrative served as a medium for expressing the hopes and fears that arose from the deep social, political, and intellectual uncertainties of the long 19th century. Writers reflected on the changes of their time, especially those related to knowledge, technology, and society. Rather than simply celebrating or rejecting the new, these texts express a shared sense of ambivalence—marked by fascination, unease, and distance—revealing complex and sometimes contradictory responses to cultural and intellectual upheaval.

Looking at diverse forms of Chinese narrative, the papers in this panel examine how late Qing and early Republican authors used established literary forms to process cultural otherness, foreign knowledge, and modern anxieties, and to explore themes of yi 異 (otherness), memory, and ambivalence in a time of epistemic and social transformation. Sebastian Eicher looks at the interplay of the unfamiliar and the conventional in biographies of foreigners by Jiang Dufu and Wang Tao. Roland Altenburger explores how Wang Tao rewrote his own travel experiences to fulfill his readership's psychological needs in tales of foreign beauties. Sabine Weber discusses how the quasi-historical novel Pacifying Jinchuan expands the category of the strange to include foreign technology and Catholic religion. Finally, Rania Huntington looks at how Guo Zeyun used old-style strange tales to reconcile his memories and the present in the 1930s. Central questions will be how writers engaged with the foreign or "other", how they reconfigured classic genres to address new experiences, and how they responded to their times' major epistemological shifts.

**Keywords:** Otherness (異), Epistemic Transformation, Late Qing and Early Republican Narrative, Cultural Encounter

**Sebastian Eicher (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)** – *Extraordinary Foreigners: Wang Tao's and Jiang Dunfu's Biographies of Foreigners*

This paper examines a small corpus of short biographical writings on Western figures by two prominent late Qing intellectuals, Jiang Dunfu 蔣敦復 (1808–1867) and Wang Tao 王韜 (1828–1897), both of whom lived and worked in treaty port Shanghai and engaged extensively with the West. Jiang authored three separate biographies of past figures—Julius Caesar, Joan of Arc, and George Washington. Wang, in contrast, left behind accounts of contemporaries, among them Charles Blondin, Stanislaus Julien, Benjamin Hobson, and a Japanese woman called A'Zhuan. Despite obvious differences, the common thread running through these writings is the notion of yi 異 (extraordinariness, strangeness, otherness), which provides a basis for comparison. This paper explores how the two authors defined and represented yi with regards to foreign figures, how traditional narrative conventions shaped their portrayals, and what purposes these texts served. It argues that these biographies reflect a sustained interest in the unfamiliar and illustrate how foreign exemplars were interpreted through Chinese literary and cultural frameworks, contributing to broader patterns of narrative experimentation and cultural exchange in the late Qing.

**Sabine Weber (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg),** – *When Nian Gengyao flew in the Pope from Rome – European Culture and Technology in Pacifying Jinchuan*

While following the conventions of the Ming and Qing military romance and the romances of supernatural warfare,

Zhang Xiaoshan's 張小山 novel on General Nian Gengyao's (年羹堯, 1679–1726) military conquest against the Khoshut and Tibetans in Qinghai 1723/4,Pacifying Jinchuan (Ping Jinchuan 平金川, full title General Nian Pacifying the West [Nian dajiangjun ping Xi zhuan 年大將軍平西傳], 1899), poses a literary mirror for the social, cultural and epistemological challenges characteristic for cosmopolitan late Qing China, i.e. between the industrialized foreign and the self, the old and the new. Written in Shanghai at the end of the 19th century, Zhang's personal exposure to the international other caused him to expand the realm of the geographic strange or exotic (yi 異) and the strange or astonishing (qi 奇) to include European religion and technology: in Pacifying Jinchuan, the Pope bans Daoist ice magic, and Swedish electrical whips compete with Tibetan acid-throwers.
However, while comparative accommodations of foreign culture and technology are also visible in the works of other Shanghai authors like Wang Tao (as discussed elsewhere on this panel), Zhang Xiaoshan's work is set apart by his discussions of Catholicism. Where Wang reduced his praise to foreign useful achievements and kept his baptism a secret, Zhang openly praises Catholicism, thereby revealing an influence by the Catholic mission. As such, Pacifying Jinchuan throws a different light on the complexity of personal European-Chinese encounters in contemporary Shanghai.

**Rania Huntington (University of Wisconsin-Madison)** – *Anachronism, Nostalgia, and Repair: Collecting Qing-style Strange Tales in 1930s Beijing*

In the 1930s, Guo Zeyun 郭則澐 (1882-1946) compiled three collections of classical language strange tales, Dongling xiaozhi 洞靈小志 (1934), Dongling xuzhi 洞靈續志 (1936) and Dongling buzhi 洞靈補志 (after 1936 but unpublished until 2010), an act that seemed in that moment brazenly anachronistic. In contrast with Wang Tao's ostensible emulation of the long, embellished tales of Liaozhai zhiyi discussed in other papers on this panel, Guo wrote in the tradition of Ji Yun's 紀昀 Yuewei caotang biji 閱微草堂筆記 and, more directly, his wife's grandfather Yu Yue's 俞樾 Youtai xianguan biji 右台仙館筆記, recording stories circulating in his family and community with meticulous attention to the names of informants, and as well as multi-vocal discussion of the meanings of the tales. He arrays experiences reaching back into the late Qing beside more contemporary accounts, tales that confront the current context explicitly and those that would not have seemed out of place in a collection a century before. The Guangxu era during which Wang Tao wrote has become an object of nostalgia. Guo's collection is making an argument that conservative storytelling practice still serves to preserve the memory of family and community, and that old tropes of haunting and divine intervention still help to make sense of a troubled time.

**Roland Altenburger (Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg)** – *Beauties from Overseas: Wang Tao's Tales of the Foreign Strange*

Wang Tao 王濤 (1828-1897), after his close cooperations with British missionaries and sinologists, including a long period of exile in Hong Kong and a three-year journey to Europe, returned to Shanghai in 1884. There he became involved in the emerging field of newspaper journalism and publishing, drawing on his reputation as a famous writer. He also wrote several series of classical tales that were widely read. Most influential were the tales at first serialized in a supplement to Dianshi zhai huabao 點石齋畫報 and collected as Songyin manlu 淞隱漫錄 (Casual Records from the Retreat by the Suzhou Creek, 1887), later retitled as Hou Liaozhai zhiyi 後聊齋志異 (Later Liaozhai's Chronicle of the Strange, 1891). The tales involving Europeans and other foreigners included in this collection have received considerable scholarly attention. They nevertheless have remained partly underread as to their complex signification that serves the negotiation between the Chinese civilization of tradition and the foreign challenges of the present. Semiotically they play on the fields of technology, body, and gender; rhetorically they seek compensatory reversal and reconciliation, aiming at a symbolical strengthening of the Qing empire and Chinese masculinity. Some episodes in Wang Tao's tales would seem to reimagine his own experiences abroad in striking ways. While they can partly be demonstrated to be rewritings of passages from his travel accounts, they catered to important psychosocial needs of the contemporaneous readership.

[500] Xin Wang (University of Lisbon), Giovanni Giamello (Aalborg University), Jelena Gledić (University of Belgrade), Xiangmin Huang (University of Lisbon), Giuseppe Rizzuto (University of Florence) and Qianwen Xue (University of Chicago). *Situated Encounters: Researchers' Methodology and Positionality in Chinese Transnational Migration Contexts.*

**Abstract.** This panel invites researchers from different backgrounds who adopt ethnographic approaches to Chinese transnational migration contexts to join an open, reflexive dialogue on the methodology and positionality inside—and after—the field. Building on the critical approach to "Chineseness" (e.g., Ien Ang, Allen Chun), this symposium will also draw from critical race theory, examining the impact of racialization and other categorization

processes on research concerning the "Chinese", and foster a rethinking of ethnic identity, diaspora, and transnationalism in Europe, Asia and beyond.
In particular, this panel is trying to explore the role of researchers' bodies, emotions, capitals, and experiences in fieldwork interactions within "Chinese communities". Concurrently, we will incorporate perspectives from Donna Haraway's "situated knowledge," to analyze how researchers' positions regarding race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, language, and cultural affiliation shape their fieldwork experiences and knowledge production in the following way:
• How do researchers navigate language and identity labels when working with Chinese diasporic communities?
• How can researchers practice critical reflexivity through specific methods (e.g., reflective journaling, collaborative ethnography, oral history) to uncover the influence of their positionality in fieldwork?
• How does researchers' positionality impact power dynamics and ethical considerations in the field, and how can these challenges be effectively addressed in research practice?
By inviting contributions from scholars with diverse positionalities and field contexts, this panel aims to be an open invitation to share critical methodological reflections, and collectively rethink how language, race, gender and other positions intersect in knowledge production of Chinese transnational migration contexts.
**Keywords:** Ethnography, Positionality, Transnational migration, Chinese diaspora, Chineseness

**Jelena Gledić (University of Belgrade)** – *Scholar/Teacher/Translator: Navigating Researchers' Multiple Roles in Chinese Diasporic Contexts*
This paper reflects on the positionality of scholars who occupy multiple roles in relation to Chinese diasporic communities, namely, researchers who also educate those who work with the Chinese diaspora or who themselves work as freelance translators, interpreters, consultants, etc. These overlapping roles enable distinctive, often long-term connections with members of the Chinese diaspora, for example, through former students or professional contacts. At the same time, they shape how the researcher is perceived and categorized in the field, especially in a context where certain labels (e.g., "teacher") carry culturally specific meanings that imply authority and can influence rapport and access. Taking on multiple roles can be seen as a choice researchers can avoid, but in smaller countries, boundaries between research, teaching, and community engagement are often impossible to maintain. Drawing on the concept of situated knowledge, this study examines the processes of role-switching and boundary-shifting that occur when fieldwork is conducted in the context of existing long-term interpersonal ties with the Chinese diaspora. A special focus is put on how these specific power dynamics relate to the notion of Chineseness in diaspora research. Through examples of various autoethnographic methods, this research discusses research design in light of the outlined challenges and demonstrates how researchers can cultivate critical reflexivity that highlights ethical responsibility. By exploring practical strategies for acknowledging and navigating the advantages, vulnerabilities, and ethical tensions of the multiple roles researchers can assume, it aims to contribute to understanding this hybrid professional identity in research on Chinese diasporic communities.
**Xiangmin Huang (University of Lisbon)** – *Situated Knowledge and Linguistic Power: A Chinese Researcher in Portugal Navigating Macau's Religious Field*
This study examines how my positionality as a Mainland Chinese researcher currently based in Portugal shapes the ways knowledge is produced in my ethnographic study of Macau's religious heritage sites. While previous scholarship often foregrounds institutional frameworks of "heritage", my field experiences reveal that knowledge production is deeply conditioned by the researcher's body, linguistic repertoire, emotional responses, and the local categorization of "Chineseness". Methodologically, I draw on situated knowledge (Haraway 1988), reflexive ethnography, and long-term field engagement across temples, neighborhood associations, and heritage tourism settings. I focus on three aspects. First, I examine how language choices and the labels assigned to me, ranging from labels such as "Mainland Chinese student" to "Mainland Chinese researcher", mediate access, trust, and the narratives informants share. Second, I discuss how my transnational trajectory generates shifting power dynamics: sometimes granting me insider cultural familiarity, sometimes positioning me as an outsider negotiating dual insider-outsider perspectives, institutional restrictions, and identity expectations. Third, I analyze how reflexive practices including field diaries, emotional mapping, and collaborative conversations with interlocutors help reveal my own influence on what becomes recorded, emphasized, or silenced. By foregrounding these methodological reflections, I argue that studying Chinese religious heritage requires more than linguistic competence or formal access. It demands continuous attention to how the researcher's racialized, national, and linguistic identity shapes ethnographic encounters. Ultimately, the study contributes to broader discussions on positionality within Chinese diaspora studies by showing how "Chineseness" is relationally produced through situated, everyday interactions in the field.

**Giuseppe Rizzuto (University of Florence)** – *Althabe's "Implication" of the Researcher within the Sinophone Space. Rethinking Fieldwork Relationships in the Study of Chinese Mobility*

This presentation examines the role of reflexive ethnography in Sinophone studies, highlighting the relevance of Althabe's perspective for researching Chinese mobility. In this framework, interlocutors actively implicate the researcher in relationships shaped by their own social universe, prior knowledge, representations and power relations (Althabe and Hernandez 2004). Who is the researcher to their interlocutors? How do participants situate him or her during fieldwork? And how does this positionality shape the production of knowledge? Drawing on ethnographic case studies, the presentation argues that knowledge production in Chinese-related fieldwork is inseparable from the researcher's situated positionality. Ethnographic encounters reveal not only the subjects' strategies of identity construction in relation to Chineseness but also how the researcher's position – continuously reshaped by participants – becomes a key element for understanding the production of these social and cultural identities. Rather than merely collecting information or opinions, the research aims to uncover the processes through which they are produced (Althabe 2001; Fava 2017). Ethnography emerges as an interpretive practice that explicitly includes the researcher in the field while limiting the potential risks of self-referentiality by centering attention on the relationships among all the actors involved. The presentation contributes to rethinking identity, diaspora and language beyond essentialist paradigms, illustrating the transformative potential of reflexive, relational ethnography for sociolinguistic research on Chinese mobility.

**Qianwen Xue (University of Chicago)** – *Guerrilla Survival of Chinese Queers: A Whack-a-Mole Philosophy of Living in the Gaps*

This paper explores the daily survival strategies of transgender women as they navigate gaps between medical, legal, familial, and temporal structures in Chinese cities. Based on a nine-month multi-site ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Nanjing, including semi-structured interviews with 23 transgender women, participant observation, and digital ethnography, it proposes the conceptual framework of "structural gaps." Rather than portraying transgender lives through a binary lens of victimhood or resistance, this study examines how transgender women negotiate legitimacy within fragmented identity systems, reconstruct kinship bonds amid patriarchal obligations, and endure the nonlinear shifts of gender transition through bodily stasis, repetition, and silence. These fragmented domains are theorized as "fissures": zones of institutional misalignment and governance uncertainty that simultaneously constrain and enable action. I describe the emergent strategic patterns within these spaces as a "whack-a-mole philosophy of survival", a guerrilla mode of existence characterized by rhythmic visibility, partial recognition, and continuous recalibration. Grounded in queer theory, medical anthropology, and East Asian kinship studies, this research reveals how transgender women construct ephemeral legal pathways, moral economies, and affective infrastructures. The paper ultimately argues that institutional gaps are not merely zones of exclusion but also sites of creativity and ethical improvisation, where subjects survive not by overcoming power but by navigating its fissures with ingenuity.

**Giovanni Giamello (Aalborg University) and Xin Wang (University of Lisbon)** – *Navigating Semantic Binaries: Zhongguoren, Laowai, Zijiren, and Waidiren as Situational Coordinates of Belonging*

In the globalized economy of the Wenzhou diaspora, trust is geographically specific and linguistically coded. Drawing on comparative fieldwork in Prato, Italy and Praia, Cape Verde, this work tries to examine how the categories of Zhongguoren (Chinese nationals), laowai (foreigners), zijiren (insiders) and waidiren (outsiders) are manipulated to construct a shifting "Radius of Trust." Linguistic tension operates on two planes: between the mainstream language (Italian or Cape Verdean Creole) and a "community" Chinese, and within Chinese between standard Mandarin and the "home" code of Wenzhounese. We trace two corresponding levels of encryption: switching from mainstream languages into Chinese, and, in Mandarin-speaking encounters, switching into Wenzhounese to selectively include zijiren while excluding both waidiren and laowai. Our own positionalities complicate this landscape. Giovanni, a white Italian man fluent in Mandarin, and Wang, a Northern Chinese man who doesn't speak Wenzhounese, are differently legible but similarly suspect: alternately absorbed into a provisional "we", read as extensions of the State, or treated as potential auditors rather than friends. Here, Mandarin proficiency and shared nationality emerge as necessary yet insufficient conditions for trust. We conceptualize a stratified, shared Chineseness with uneven levels of accessibility, where cultural capital, regional accent, phenotypical legibility, and local Wenzhounese guanxi can trump national solidarity. By reading code-switching as "tactical othering", we show how Wenzhouneseness—understood as regional identification and self-identification—can be activated more strongly than Chineseness, contingently on a "hierarchy of danger", recalibrating power, trust, and ethical stakes in the field.

[501] Hsiaoju Chu (National Taiwan Normal University, Hsiaofeng Shih (National Taiwan Normal University), Peiti Xue (National Taiwan Normal University) and Tzutang Wang (National Taiwan Normal University). *Trauma, Memory, the Body, and Ethics in East Asian Cold War Fiction.*

**Abstract.** This panel brings together scholars specializing in the literature of Taiwan, Quemoy, Hong Kong, and Malaysia to collectively interrogate the enduring impact of the Cold War. Our focus centers on the interconnected themes of trauma, memory, the body, and ethics as manifested in East Asian narratives that emerged under geopolitical tension. Xue Peiti initiates the discussion by examining the anxieties of modernity during Taiwan's U.S. aid era. Her analysis reveals how the structural violence of economic colonialism infiltrated the plebeian body, thereby constituting a specific politics of emotion. Shih Hsiaofeng investigates Quemoy women's "exceptional/everyday" identities within the military sphere, exploring how institutions like female self-defense forces and the culture of military prostitutes were understood under states of exception. Chu Hsiaoju analyzes Zhao Zifan's Halfway Down to discuss the refugee experience in Hong Kong, detailing the labor, illness, disability, and Cold War trauma. Her work frames the refugees' struggle as a cyclical experience of "escape/entrapment" within the region's complex geopolitical enclosure. Finally, Wang Tzutang's study of Malaysian New Village childhood narratives illustrates how the Cold War 's ideological violence was not merely a political event but became deeply embedded in daily habits, rendering political conflict as a normalized feature of the social environment.

**Keywords:** Cold War, Trauma, Memory, The Body, Ethics

**Peiti Xue (National Taiwan Normal University)** – *Salvation or Despair? Bodily Affect and Modernity Anxieties of the Plebeian Experience in Taiwan's U.S. Aid Era*

Despite the termination of U.S. aid in 1965, its latent ideology persisted as an anxious specter haunting the plebeian class throughout the period of economic boom and the severance of diplomatic ties between the U.S. and Taiwan in the 1970s and 1980s. Therefore, this paper takes Huang Chunming's The Taste of Apple (1972), Wang Chenho's A Portrait of Beauties (1982), and Chen Yingzhen's "Washington Building series" (1978-1987) as research texts. It analyzes the somatic representations of the plebeian class under the U.S. aid era, reflecting on the infiltration of economic colonialism into everyday life and the subsequent emergence of modernity anxieties among the Taiwanese populace. First, the paper analyzes how, under capitalist encroachment, the tears of the subaltern function as a central signifier for affective disintegration and the permeation of anxiety. Second, through the embodiment of repressed and accumulated affect, the study argues that illness and madness are not mere physiological overloads but serve as resistance against an "abnormal" social order. Furthermore, employing Michel Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, I examine how these authors utilize novelistic space to naturalize the illusory construction of "First World" American civilization. The aim is to re-examine the historical positionality of Taiwan's commoners.

**Hsiao-Feng Shih (National Taiwan Normal University)** – *The "Exceptional" Predicament of Women in Chen Changching's Cold War-Themed Quemoy Novels Shih Hsiaofeng*

Chen Changching (1946-), a native of Bishan, Quemoy, experienced the war firsthand and often employs a realist narrative approach to depict the local conditions and cultural landscape of Quemoy. This article will particularly focus on his series of novels concerning "Military Prostitutes" and "Quemoy Women." The establishment of the Quemoy Designated Teahouse (military brothels) had a distinct historical and regional context, significantly impacting residents' lives and the development of the region's economy and consumption. Chen Chang-ching's "Military Prostitutes" series of novels exposes a military gender culture where women were subjected to ridicule and humiliation. Furthermore, due to geopolitical influences, a massive influx of Nationalist (Kuomintang, KMT) troops was stationed on Quemoy after 1949. In the early stages, soldiers even billeted in local civilian homes, giving rise to complex, deeply entangled relationships between the military and Quemoy women. Caught in the multiple webs of patriarchy and the military, how to re-examine the articulation between the "exceptional" predicament roles of these women and the unique military prostitute culture of Quemoy is a highly significant topic. This article introduces geopolitical concepts combined with sociological inquiry to provide an in-depth interpretation.

**Hsiaoju Chu (National Taiwan Normal University)** – *Captivity or Redemption? Bottom-Tier Trauma and Spiritual Ethics in Zhao Zifan's Novel Halfway Down*

Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, a large number of political refugees poured into Hong Kong, congregating in Rennie's Mill, a desolate area on the eastern Kowloon Peninsula. Zhao Zifan's (1924–1986) novel, Halfway Down, focuses on these refugees, depicting the marginalization and resistance consciousness of the "Southern sojourners" in their bottom-tier existence. As an influential anti-communist work from the 1950s, Halfway Down has often been analyzed through the lenses of state policy literature and the state

apparatus. However,beyond its adherence to Party-State ideology, the ubiquitous spectre of the Cold War infiltrating the body and psyche of the individual vividly reflects Hong Kong's deep predicament under the Cold War structure. This paper seeks to re-situate Halfway Down within the "Cold War" framework, exploring the physical and psychological trauma endured by the subaltern characters amidst labor, illness, and disability. How did the refugees, confined by the multi- layered spatial enclosure—composed of political rivalry, capitalist alienation, and colonial culture, exhibit agency in their struggle? How is this struggle manifested as a constant cycle of "escape/confinement"? The dark shadow of the Cold War perpetually envelopes the experience of exile. The central thesis of this paper is to examine whether the spiritual ethics forged by this existential struggle ultimately offer an exit toward redemption or merely constitute another form of internalized captivity.

**Tzutang Wang (National Taiwan Normal University)** – *How Is War Remembered? New Village Childhood and the Everydayness of the Cold War in Liang Jinqun's Wild Village Girl*

By centralizing previously dispersed Chinese settlements, the New Villages gradually formed distinctive marginalized community cultures and collective memories, becoming crucial sites for the construction of Malaysian Chinese identity, social autonomy, and class structures. Born in the 1970s, Liang Jinqun, in Wild Village Girl: Essays on Life in Malaysian New Villages, revisits the New Village through the lens of childhood perception and lived memory, demonstrating how Cold War violence permeated everyday life through institutional, spatial, and habitual practices, thereby generating a sense of historical residue. This study seeks to examine how war and violence are rendered into the "everyday" in the writings of authors who did not directly experience the conflict, and how childhood experiences in the New Village can serve as a medium for understanding Cold War legacies. As a second-generation New Village resident, Liang Jinqun reconstructs New Village experiences from a life-history perspective, offering a unique pathway to understanding both Malaysian New Villages and East Asian Cold War history, and thereby extending memories of war through subtle perceptions of daily life and reflective retrospection.

[502] Valentina Bottanelli (Ca' Foscari University of Venice). *Reforming Confucius: Justus Heurnius and his 1628 Latin translation of the Lunyu 论语.*

**Abstract.** The history of early modern Latin translations of the Lunyu 论语 is predominantly traced through a Jesuit lineage. This paper reframes that narrative by examining the overlooked translation compiled by the Calvinist pastor Justus Heurnius in Batavia around 1628. Preserved across three manuscripts (Oxford, Marsh 456; London, Sloane 2746; Leiden, Acad 225), his work is the earliest surviving seventeenth-century Latin version, and it thus occupies a critical position between the manuscripts of Ruggieri from the 1590s and Prospero Intorcetta's later printed Sapientia Sinica.

Although Heurnius relied on Jesuit sources for his Chinese text and romanisation, his methodological approach diverged significantly. This analysis details his interpretative choices, demonstrating how his consistent translation of core concepts, for instance rendering dao 道 as ratio, fashioned a vision of Confucian thought centred on practical wisdom. This deliberately distanced the text from the religious framing latent in his sources. I will argue that his strategy, characterised by literal rendition and the avoidance of Neo-Confucian exegesis, presented Confucianism as a system of civic ethics, distinct from the theologically charged interpretations of his contemporaries. Crucially, the unique triple-column format of his manuscripts, which features character, romanisation, and literal Latin gloss, facilitated a granular and syntactic analysis of Classical Chinese, revealing a primary focus on language acquisition. This presentation contends that Heurnius's work offers an invaluable and alternative record of the European encounter with the Lunyu, one which repurposes Jesuit materials for a distinct and linguistically focused reception.

**Keywords:** Lunyu 论语, Latin translation, Justus Heurnius, Early Modern sinology, Confucian ethics, Manuscript studies

[503] Henning Klöter (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), Hans-Jörg Döhla (Universität Tübingen), John Oliver Monghit (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), Martina Scholger (Universität Graz), Elisabeth Steiner (Universität Graz), Sabrina Strutz (Universität Graz) and Melanie Frauendorfer (Universität Graz). *Editing a Forgotten Hokkien Dictionary: Script, Language and Bias in the 'Bocabulario de lengua sangleya'.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines an early seventeenth-century Chinese–Spanish manuscript dictionary, the 'Bocabulario de lengua sangleya por las letraz de el A.B.C.'. Comprising 223 double-sided folios, it offers extensive documentation of the Sinitic Hokkien variety spoken by Chinese migrants in Manila. Among its distinctive features are the romanized transcriptions for Hokkien entries and example sentences – rendered in an orthography that is inconsistent and frequently marked by misspellings – together with a multifaceted and often inventive

metalanguage. Shaped by a Spanish colonial worldview, the example sentences span a wide range of topics, including moral and religious injunctions as well as observations on Chinese customs and traditions.
The presentations address two overarching questions: How can lexicographical content be retrieved, reproduced, and analysed despite orthographic opacity, and what is the value of the Bocabulario as a historico-linguistic source text? We will approach these questions in three stages. First, we consider how linguistic comparison with other Hokkien missionary sources, together with an examination of the Spanish metalanguage, can support a reconstruction of the linguistic structure of this Hokkien variety, notably the tone system. Second, we explore the challenges of representing these findings in a transcription system that is both linguistically sound and compatible with contemporary standards of digital codability. Finally, by analysing entry selection and example sentences, we examine the extent to which the Bocabulario reflects the religious and moral biases of its compiler and consider how far it can serve as a reliable historical witness to the early Chinese-Spanish encounter in the Philippines.
**Keywords:** missionary linguistics, Hokkien, lexicography, Chinese-Western manuscripts, critical digital edition

**Hans-Jörg Döhla (Universität Tübingen)** – *The Spanish Metalanguage in the 'Bocabulario de la lengua sangleya'*
The 'Bocabulario de la lengua sangleya' (ca. 1617), a Hokkien-Spanish dictionary compiled by Dominican missionaries in Manila, stands as one of the earliest and most intriguing attempts to document a Sinitic language through a European linguistic lens. This presentation examines the metalanguage of the Bocabulario – that is, the Spanish terminology, grammatical categories, and descriptive strategies employed to represent Hokkien. Like other missionary linguistic works of the early modern period, the Bocabulario reveals both remarkable innovation and deep intellectual continuity: while the compilers developed new lexical and conceptual tools to capture the unfamiliar structures of Hokkien, their analyses remained framed within the inherited categories of Latin and scholastic grammar. By analyzing key entries and the grammatical commentary embedded within the dictionary, this presentation explores how the Spanish missionaries negotiated the epistemological tension between empirical observation and the constraints of their classical linguistic models. Ultimately, the Bocabulario emerges as a site of cross-cultural linguistic creativity, reflecting both the global circulation of Iberian missionary scholarship and the early modern encounter between European and East Asian linguistic traditions.
**John Oliver Monghit (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)** – *The Tones of Early Manila Hokkien: New Insights from the Bocabulario*
During the 17th century, Spanish Catholic missionaries and their consultants authored several philological resources on Early Manila Hokkien, the vernacular of the local Chinese community in the Philippines. As the oldest written record of the language, these sources provide invaluable insights into the structure of a Chinese variety spoken four hundred years ago. While reconstructions of its phonological system have been proposed, its tonal properties remain unclear. This presentation will focus on the 'Bocabulario de la lengua sangleya' (ca. 1617) and its metalanguage, specifically its treatment of tones. We will analyze how it describes the seven tones of Early Manila Hokkien, using selected dictionary entries. Following this analysis, the specific qualities of each toneme will be determined by summarizing these descriptions and comparing them with other sources. Lastly, the evolution of each tone from Proto-Southern Min will be traced. This study reveals the strategies missionaries used to describe a linguistic phenomenon unfamiliar to them yet crucial to the language: tone. Furthermore, it aims to shed light on the debated nature of Early Manila Hokkien, specifically whether it was a mixed dialect. Most importantly, the physical properties of each tone are reconstructed using specific examples.
**Martina Scholger (Universität Graz), Elisabeth Steiner (Universität Graz), Sabrina Strutz (Universität Graz), and Melanie Frauendorfer (Universität Graz)** – *The 'Bocabulario de lengua sangleya' as a Digital Scholarly Edition: Challenges from the Digital Humanities*
The digital representation of multilingual, multiscript, and linguistically diverse historical material requires encoding principles that balance the preservation of source-specific features while producing standardized data suitable for computational analysis. In this talk, an approach to creating a complex digital scholarly edition of the Bocabulario using the standard of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) is presented. The edition comprises five layers: (1) facsimile, (2) diplomatic transcription, (3) critical and normalized edition, (4) translation and transliteration, and (5) linguistic analysis including interlinear glossing and tonal annotation. Particular attention is given to the representation of tonal features in text encoding. Because tone is an underrepresented feature in current TEI practice, the project proposes extending TEI's capacity in this area. The aim is twofold: to provide a means to add information on the seven reconstructed Hokkien tone categories in the Bocabulario, and to contribute to broader standardization efforts within the TEI community regarding the treatment of tone in other languages.
Publishing the edition as open research data ensures interoperability and encourages reuse across disciplines. The

resulting dataset enables research on metalanguage, lexicographic structure, multilingual language contact, and features of early Hokkien in the historical context of Spanish-Chinese interaction. It supports such investigations through advanced search strategies for linguistic features, a synoptic presentation of facsimile and transcription, and comparative access to the diplomatic, normalized, and linguistically annotated layers.

**Henning Klöter (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)** – *"Why did the Padre reprehend you?" A content analysis of the 'Bocabulario de la lengua sangleya'*

The 'Bocabulario de la lengua sangleya' is a textbook example of how linguistic, didactic, and ideological considerations shape the contents of a dictionary. With roughly 1,400 entries spread across 223 double-sided folios, the compiler was compelled to make strategic decisions about how to allocate this limited space to entries and accompanying lexicographic information, including example sentences. This presentation aims to uncover that strategy through a close reading of the dictionary's contents and cross-references to other Spanish-Hokkien dictionaries of the same period. As one might expect, the Bocabulario contains a substantial amount of mission-related material, interwoven with moral admonitions directed at members of the Chinese community, ranging from explicit instructions to more oblique references to sexual practices. At the same time, a number of entries display genuine curiosity and intellectual engagement with the Chinese cultural sphere, including explanations of the Chinese writing system and the zodiac signs. Taken together, these observations highlight both the potential and the limitations of using lexicographic materials shaped by a colonial and missionary worldview as historical sources. They also underscore the value of integrating linguistic analysis with historical inquiry, demonstrating how dictionaries like the Bocabulario can illuminate cross-cultural encounters even as they refract them through the biases of their compilers.

[508] Rebecca Ehrenwirth (University of Applied Sciences/SDI Munich), Howard Chiang (University of California Santa Barbara), Maggie Leung (University of Hong Kong) and Huang-Hua Chen (National Tsing Hua University). *Translating the Sinophone: Minor Languages, Gendered Voices, and the Politics of Cultural Specificity.*

**Abstract.** How do we translate the Sinophone without losing its multiplicity? This panel explores the translational dynamics shaping Sinophone literature — texts in Sinitic languages beyond the geopolitical boundaries of China — through translation studies, gender theory, and minor language politics. Building on interventions by Shu-mei Shih, Rey Chow, and Lydia Liu, we interrogate how translation mediates Sinophone diversity.

Translation can enable circulation but also constrain it. When translators grapple with culturally specific terms or gendered registers, their choices carry political, ethical, and aesthetic consequences. How can translation make visible the gendered and localized positionalities of Sinophone authors without subsuming them into global English or Eurocentric norms? How might translators resist the centripetal pull of Standard Mandarin or dominant Western literary frameworks? Drawing on postcolonial translation theory (Spivak, Venuti), feminist linguistics (Cameron), and minor transnational frameworks (Lionnet and Shih), the panel reframes translation as a site of encounter — where asymmetries of language, gender, and power are negotiated and reimagined.

Adopting an interactive "translation workshop" format, each participant presents a short excerpt (original and translated), highlighting a specific linguistic or cultural challenge. The audience engages in guided mini-discussions on competing translation strategies, followed by a concluding roundtable linking these case studies to broader theoretical concerns. This format foregrounds translation as praxis, inviting participants to inhabit the tensions and possibilities of rendering the Sinophone across languages, identities, and cultural registers.

**Keywords:** Sinophone, Translation, Gender, Marginalization, Transnational

**Howard Chiang (University of California Santa Barbara)** – *Translating Queer Indigeneity and Multiculturalism in Taiwan*

This paper expands the horizon of queer Sinophone studies by considering the translation of indigeneity and migrant culture into queer Sinophone literature in Taiwan. In the last two decades, a nascent queer/trans Indigenous movement has acquired intertribal shape and political currency in Taiwan. This movement centers on the Austronesian concept of adju, which has broadened from a narrow meaning of "sisters" to a more general label for gender diverse individuals in Indigenous Taiwan. I contrast that with the growing queer indigenous literature, the genealogy of which adju assumes a decisive absence. Yet, writers such as Dadelavan Ibau and Apyang Imig offer a robust lineage of queer indigenous literary production in Taiwan. The double marginality of Indigenous queers in Taiwan can be best understood through the way that the Han majority came to redefine the sexual normativity of Austronesian societies and coerce them into economic poverty and racial discrimination. Following the discussion

of adju politics, this paper presents queer migrant culture as a conceptual homologue to queer Indigenous activism in Taiwan. Both minoritized subject positions — queer migrant and queer Indigenous — confront Han domination in the mainstream definition of Taiwan-ness; at the same time, both have witnessed an increasing salience to the evolving landscape of multiculturalism that characterizes Taiwan's democracy and diversity. Sinophone studies proves indispensable for understanding this translational dynamics, because the majority of queer migrant and queer Indigenous cultures leave the farthest footprint via Sinitic-language representations in Taiwan.

**Maggie Leung (University of Hong Kong)** – *Translating the song of the past: The Gong Strikes One's naam4 jam1 Project*

This paper discusses the Hong Kong naam4 jam1 南音 duo The Gong Strikes One (TGSO hereafter) 一才鑼鼓's artistic strategy of translating the traditional Cantonese singing form into contemporary life. Naam4 jam1 is a form of narrative singing widely performed by blind singers in everyday entertainment spaces from the late 19th century in the southern part of China. In Hong Kong, the rapid modernisation of lifestyle from the 1960s obliterated naam4 jam1's original habitat such as tea houses and brothels. Determined to sustain and develop the art and craft of naam4 jam1, TGSO defines the authenticity of the musical form in terms of the musicalisation of speech in and of everyday life, around which the duo designed and organised its 2024 workshop series. TGSO's conceptualisation of the form, structure and aesthetics of naam4 jam1, as well as their emphasis on the drilling of basic technique, successfully makes the traditional music form participatory for learners and its aesthetics accessible through active embodiment of basic techniques. TGSO's artistic strategy demonstrates that a way to heritagise a fading tradition is to democratise it through unpacking its artistic complexity and possibility and invites contemporary participation and reinvention. Such a strategy is a great contrast to many present-day heritage projects that emphasise the antiquity or the cultural-historical significance of traditional art forms that see them as cultural capitals that people need to compete for and accumulate. This presentation will begin with a demonstration of musicalising Cantonese everyday speech following the naam4 jam1 logic and method, as well as a small performance of an excerpt from a naam4 jam1 classic to show the pleasure an ordinary learner can enjoy. Then the presentation will move on to explain how such a strategy democratises both naam4 jam1 and its implications on Sinophone diversity.

**Huang-Hua Chen (National Tsing Hua University)** – *Anachronistic Translation and Sinophone Epistolarity in Taiwan Travelogue*

This paper reads Taiwan Travelogue (2020) by Shuang-zi Yang as a Sinophone work in which anachronism and mistranslation lie at the heart of its novelistic and epistolary production. Framed as a translation of a Japanese news dispatch that never historically existed, the novel constructs a multilayered system of pseudo-sources, invented afterwords, and gendered translators whose voices only partially overlap. These temporal and linguistic misalignments are not narrative accidents but deliberate formal operations: Taiwan Travelogue stages translation as a recursive correspondence across moments that cannot meet, turning the novel into a belated "letter" that turns topsy-turvy, written simultaneously to the past and the future. The Sinophone emerges here through the friction of languages that cannot fully coincide: Japanese colonial reportage, Taiwanese vernacular worlds, Mandarin rewriting, and later English retranslation by Lin King. Each layer carries remainders, silences, or distortions; each translation rewrites rather than reproduces. In this sense, the novel treats mistranslation not as error but as its generative engine. Because its linguistic layers never settle into equivalence, the gaps between them become the very space where minor voices, queer affects, and deferred ethical relations can appear. By foregrounding this unstable relay among translators, languages, and historical moments, Taiwan Travelogue reveals Sinophone translation to be an ongoing act of ethical response, one grounded not in fidelity, but in the productive dissonances through which cultural memory, gendered voices, and minor literature/language persist.

**Rebecca Ehrenwirth (University of Applied Sciences/SDI Munich)** – *Translating Mu Cao's 孤独的边缘: Queer Minor Literacies at the Limits of the Sinophone*

This paper examines the translational politics embedded in Mu Cao's short-story collection 孤独的边缘 (The Edge of Solitude), a seminal yet understudied work by one of the most distinctive queer Sinophone voices writing from mainland China's linguistic and social margins. Mu Cao's prose is shaped by non-standard idioms, gender-nonconforming self-fashioning, and the textured vernaculars of migrant laborers, sex workers, and queer subcultures. Engaging the panel's focus on minor languages, gendered voices, and cultural specificity, this paper argues that translating Mu Cao requires not only linguistic transfer but a negotiation of the affective, socio-economic, and embodied experiences encoded in his narratives. Drawing on Venuti's advocacy for resistant translation and Sinophone theory's sustained critique of Sinitic centrism, I explore how Mu Cao's stylistic hybridity disrupts the centripetal pull of Standard Mandarin and challenges translators to resist smoothing over difference. The paper foregrounds three recurring translation dilemmas: queer self-naming that defies binary gender norms;

regionally and class-marked vernacular speech that destabilizes metropolitan Mandarin; and the lyrical but abrasive textual textures through which Mu Cao articulates loneliness, precarity, and erotic vulnerability. Presenting a brief excerpt from my working translation, I invite an interactive analysis of competing strategies — foreignizing, feminist, and minoritizing approaches — to illustrate how translation can either amplify or efface Mu Cao's insurgent queer aesthetics. Through this case study, I argue that translating 孤独的边缘 becomes a site for reimagining Sinophone multiplicity, where linguistic, gendered, and affective marginality are not obstacles but generative forces within global literary circulation.

[513] Massimiliano Canale (University of Naples "L'Orientale"). *Romance, Courtesans, and Performance: Su Shi and the "True Colors" of the Song Lyric (Ci).*

**Abstract.** One of the most famous critiques of Su Shi's 蘇軾 (1037-1101) song lyrics (ci 詞) was expressed by his contemporary Chao Buzhi 晁補之 (1053-1110), who claimed that Su "composed ci poetry as if it were shi poetry. (...) Although employing all the mastery in the world, he ultimately did not respect its original essence (bense 本色)" — or, if you will, its "true colors." In fact, the ci production of the great Northern Song (960-1127) scholar has often been characterized as diverging from the traditional elite style, which was codified in the anthology Among the Flowers (Huajian ji 花間集). Specifically, it has been suggested that Su greatly reduced, or virtually eliminated, the role of courtesans, romance, and the musical and performative aspects, thus leading, among other things, to a "masculinization" of the song lyric. While similar claims are partly supported by the songbook attributed to the author, it is undeniable that his work also contains many lyrics about love, courtesans or women in general, and music. Significantly, those compositions have usually been overlooked by most scholars. In this paper, I seek to analyze this part of his production in order to better contextualize the relationship between Su Shi and the "true colors" (bense) of the song lyric. By doing so, I will attempt to overcome some simplifications rooted in critical discourse to reach a more complete and nuanced understanding of the author's peculiar approach to the genre.

**Keywords:** Su Shi, Song lyric (ci), Premodern Chinese literature, Premodern Chinese poetry, Song dynasty, Courtesans

[514] Martin Kern (Princeton University), Xiaoyu Xia (Princeton University), Michael Gibbs Hill (William & Mary), Ying Hu (University of California, Irvine) and Zhiyi Yang (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt). *Library of Modern Chinese Thought: A Roundtable Dialogue.*

**Abstract.** Chinese scholarship and philosophy of the first half of the twentieth century not only established the foundations of modern and contemporary thought following the collapse of the imperial state; it also shaped China's relationship with its ancient and recent past, and with the cultural and geopolitical challenges of a modern world. The lasting impact of late Qing and Republican intellectual legacies on Chinese modernity is beyond dispute. Yet beyond individual monographs and translations, our field is long overdue for a cohesive, capacious collection of modern Chinese intellectual writings in English translation.

To remedy this situation for the benefit of undergraduate and graduate students as well as for the broader academic and intellectual public interested in both China and global modernity studies, our roundtable advances a new, multifaceted collaborative project: the Library of Modern Chinese Thought. The Library is designed as a bilingual Chinese-English book series consisting of volumes on prominent individuals like Yan Fu and Lu Xun as well as thematic volumes on various keywords and salient facets of modern China, from minzu to Buddhism. With the Editorial Board hailing from Australia, China, Europe, and North America, this roundtable will begin with brief presentations on the overarching goal of the series and the varied agendas of individual volumes. The audience will then be engaged to contribute further ideas on thinkers and themes within and beyond the current vision of the Library. Through open dialogue, we hope to build a scholarly community toward a richer understanding of modern Chinese thought.

**Keywords:** book series, modern China, intellectual history, modernity and antiquity

[515] Mélissa Weihang Huang (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3). *Realism and Modernity: A Sino-Western Re-reading of Cao Yu's Thunderstorm.*

**Abstract.** This study offers a re-reading of Cao Yu's (曹禺 1910-1996) Thunderstorm (雷雨 1934) through a Sino-Western dialogic perspective. By historicizing the play in the cultural context of the 1930s and through dramaturgical analysis, we show that, contrary to the two dominant literary orientations of the time (Left-wing literature, which subordinated art to class struggle, and Liberal writers, who defended aesthetic autonomy while rejecting political engagement), Thunderstorm, through its artistic form, questions the established order while

resisting submission to emerging ideological norms.
Through its hybrid form, both classical and modern, political and intimate, the play combines Western dramaturgical models (from Greek tragedy to Ibsen) with concerns specific to contemporary China. Cao Yu thus develops a different form of realism: not socialist but artistic, giving shape to what remains invisible or unspeakable in reality. This visibility of the unseen resonates with the theatrical paradigm shift that occurred since the end of the nineteenth-century on Western stages, and its transition from representative to aesthetic theatre, as theorized by Catherine Naugrette.
This paper therefore questions intercultural exchanges at the heart of drama. Rather than opposing China and the West in a binary or mimetic framework, it proposes an analogical dialogue grounded in what each side considers potentially universalizable (Heurtebise, 2020). Thus, Thunderstorm emerges as a pivotal work in which the Real takes shape through the Chinese spectator's experience and goes beyond the reality configured by dominant ideological discourses. [250 words]
**Keywords:** Cao Yu （曹禺）, modern Chinese theatre, intercultural theatre, aesthetics, realism

[516] Andrea Revelant (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia), Shin Kawashima (The University of Tokyo) and Jianze Zhang (Kyoto University). *Sino-Japanese Relations in Northeast China, 1906–31: The Entanglement of National Policies, Regional Issues and Media Narratives.*

**Abstract.** As a result of the Russo-Japanese War, Japan acquired a set of special rights in the northeastern provinces of the Qing empire, then known internationally as Manchuria. Japanese efforts to consolidate those interests were initially successful. However, they met with increasing obstacles in the 1920s, owing to the rise of Chinese nationalism and the advance of the Nationalist Party. Elements within the Japanese army therefore decided to solve the "Manchurian problem" by force. Military occupation of the Northeast, which started in September 1931, posed the basis for the creation of the puppet state of Manchuria.
This panel presents new research on the complex relationship between Chinese and Japanese actors in the Northeast over the decades preceding the rupture point of 1931. The first paper discusses the readjustment of Japan's strategic posture in the wake of the First World War, which led to support for warlord Zhang Zuolin. Such a policy required coordination between the army and other imperial agencies on the ground. The second paper explores these institutional relations through the lens of a specific policy area, that is press management. It shows that Japanese authorities, while pursuing the same basic goals, tended to act independently from each other. The last paper takes the Wanbaoshan incident of July 1931 as an example of the perception gap between the Chinese and Japanese side over the issues at stake in the Northeast.
**Keywords:** Manchuria, Imperialism, Nationalism, Mutual perceptions

**Jianze Zhang (Kyoto University)** – *Japan's Post-World War I Manchuria Policy and the Support for Zhang Zuolin*
After World War I, the Japanese government adopted a more moderate policy toward Manchuria, with the Hara Cabinet shifting from military-political expansion to prioritizing economic interests. Yet the rapidly changing postwar environment required a new strategy to protect existing Japanese interests in Manchuria. In 1920, the policy of supporting Zhang Zuolin emerged as a response to several urgent challenges: the withdrawal from Siberia, the Zhili–Anhui War, and the Korean independence movement. The reduction of Japan's continental military presence made it necessary to construct a new buffer against Soviet radicalism, while the transnational and increasingly communist-influenced Korean movement intensified security concerns. Meanwhile, the defeat of Duan Qirui deprived Japan of a long-standing Chinese collaborator. Zhang Zuolin, with his pro-Japanese, anti-communist stance and his cooperation in suppressing Korean activists in Jiandao, became the preferred figure for Japanese backing. The local army was the primary advocate of this policy, valuing Zhang's cooperation during the Siberian expedition and relying on direct ties with regional warlords to manage local issues more effectively than formal diplomacy. After the Zhili–Anhui War, support for Zhang was broadly shared by the local army, Mantetsu, and the Japanese consulate, leading the Hara Cabinet to adopt the policy officially. This policy highlighted the coordinated roles of the army, Mantetsu, the consulate, and the Kwantung Government, extending even to propaganda through the Shengjing Shibao. Their interconnected activities illuminate the institutional dynamics of Japanese involvement in interwar Manchuria.
**Andrea Revelant (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)** – *Japanese Press Management in Northeast China, 1906–31: Intelligence, Public Diplomacy and Institutional Competition*
After Russia's defeat in the 1904–05 war with Japan, fostering a friendly press industry was one of the policies that Japanese authorities pursued in Northeast China to further cultivate the national interest there. Japanese influence

in the regional press grew by means of subsides, acquisitions and effective market strategies. By the late 1920s, however, the rise of Chinese nationalism became a serious challenge to Japan's dominant position in that field. Following the outbreak of the Manchurian Incident in 1931, anti-Japanese voices were finally silenced under military occupation.

So far, scholars have investigated mainly how Japanese propaganda and the press system developed under control of the imperial army in the 1930s. This paper, instead, discusses press management in the years before the Incident, when readers still had a choice among competing newspapers. The analysis focuses on the Shengjing Shibao, the largest Chinese-language daily circulating in the region. Archive documents show that Japanese diplomats acknowledged this newspaper as a valuable resource for collecting intelligence and promoting a positive image of Japan. At the same time, however, their initiatives suffered from a lack of coordination between imperial agencies. The Foreign Ministry had to cope with separate operations by the Kwantung Territory administration, the Kwantung Army and the South Manchuria Railway Company. Press management is therefore representative of the "four-headed politics" that Japan carried out in Manchuria as a reflection of its polycentric structure of policy making.

**Shin Kawashima (The University of Tokyo)** – *Japan-China Parallel Worlds: The Wanbaoshan Incident and Divergent Perceptions Between Japan and China*

A striking feature of the deteriorating Japan-China relations in modern times was the significant divergence in how each side perceived a series of incidents. This held true in both the diplomatic sphere and the media. There were complexities, such as differences between the perceptions of Japanese diplomats residing in China, Japanese-language media in China, Chinese-language media involving Japanese personnel in China, and perceptions within Japan itself. Particularly from the late 1920s onward, a significant gap emerged in perceptions between Japan and China. This gap eroded mutual trust and undermined "peace and stability" in East Asia. The presenter has previously highlighted how perceptions of the 1927 Nanjing Incident differed greatly between Japan and China. How, then, were other incidents perceived? This presentation examines the Wanbaoshan Incident of July 1931, also known as the spark that ignited the Manchurian Incident. This incident refers to clashes between the Chinese police, Japanese police, and Chinese farmers over a minor dispute concerning waterways at Wanbaoshan, northwest of Changchun, which had arisen between Korean settlers and local Chinese farmers. While the incident itself ended without casualties, it led to deteriorating sentiment toward Chinese people in the Korean Peninsula, triggering exclusion movements and resulting in violent attacks by Koreans against Chinese. This presentation primarily focuses on perceptions between Japan and China but also pays attention to situations within Korean society. It examines how differing perceptions were formed and whether any common understanding existed.

[517] Serena De Marchi (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), Justyna Jaguscik (University of Bern) and Cosima Bruno (SOAS University of London). *Sound and Polyphony in Sinophone Writing.*

**Abstract.** The three presentations in this panel probe Sinophone literature's engagement with acoustics and aural sensations. They are united by a methodological investment in sonic epistemology and its manifestations across diverse literary genres.

When Shu-mei Shih introduced the term Sinophone (Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations Across the Pacific, 2007), her examples drew primarily from visual art and film—media that render audible the linguistic multiplicity of Sinophone communities. This early focus contributed to the growing centrality of film within Sinophone studies, as cinema's complex mediality offered an accessible pathway for decentering the so-called standard Chinese language. By contrast, the audibility of written sinographic texts, when addressed at all, tended to be framed as an index of an author's linguistic or national identity.

Without losing sight of these earlier concerns, this panel foregrounds literary texts as aesthetic and acoustic events in their own right. It draws inspiration from the emerging interdisciplinary field of literary sound studies, seeking to collect and analyze the meaningful sonic information embedded in literary forms. The first presentation examines a recent Taiwanese novel (2022) that employs polyphony as a central narrative strategy, while the latter two turn to poetry and its relationship to performance. Across the panel, presenters trace literature's experimentation with its own modes of production—especially the interplay of graphic and linguistic elements that generate new sonic textures and acoustic energies.

**Keywords:** Modern literature, Sinophone literature, Sinophone novels, Poetry and Performance, Sound studies

**Serena De Marchi (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)** – *Re-sounding Histories: "Listening" to Lai Hsiang-yin's Portraits in White*

This paper develops an approach focused on sound to examine how Lai Hsiang-yin's 賴香吟 Portraits in White (白

色畫像, 2022) engages with Taiwan's modern history and transforms it into an aural archive. The novel is deeply polyphonic, as it weaves together multiple languages (Mandarin, Taiwanese, German, Japanese, French) as well as different musical references.
Focusing on the story of "Miss Casey," which follows a woman who escapes authoritarian Taiwan and re-settles in Europe, I argue that Lai integrates distinct tunes as historical sonic objects. Taiwanese ballads, French chansons, German cabaret, and Taiwanese nursery rhymes are intentionally and meaningfully referenced in the novel not only to mobilise affective memory but also to evoke their embedded histories of colonial modernity and transnational circulation.
The novel's polyphonic soundscape reconfigures Taiwan's history of the White Terror as an aural epistemology (Sterne, Voegelin, LaBelle), inviting readers to experience the past not only through seeing (reading) but also through sound. By including melodies and languages into this sonic archive, Lai suggests that Sinophone literature needs to be heard as well as read, positioning sound as a vital site where Taiwan's entangled histories continue to reverberate.
**Cosima Bruno (SOAS University of London)** – *Tearing Apart and Piecing Together: Che Qianzi's Poems through the Ear*
In this paper I aim to explore some devices used by the poet Che Qianzi 车前子 (1963-) that visually and sonically separates words particles to locate them in a new continuum. While this process may seem arbitrary or optional, it is intended to encourage readers to examine the complexity and interconnectedness of linguistic elements and their coexistence in producing the explosive newness and continuity of poetic language.
I will analyse synchronous features such as homophony, repetition, objét trouvé, and polysemy, and diachronous features such as etymology, separation, and inversion, to show how the poet disputes with the means of language, starting from a word and proliferating it with new unexpected meanings. The purpose is not merely to say that there is resemblance between the invoked aspects or meanings of a word, but that the interdependence among them has the ability of transforming them into each other. That is to say, by visually and aurally recirculating atomised particles of language, the poet spins out of words' memory, elliptically transforming their meaning, or simply putting forward a meaning beyond grammar.
**Justyna Jaguscik (University of Bern)** – *Aural Surrealism: Sound, Poetry, and History in Against Again Troupe's Multimedia Works*
This paper examines the concept of "sound theater" developed by the Taiwanese theater collective Against Again Troupe 再据劇團. Between 2015 and 2019, the troupe collaborated with artists from diverse backgrounds—musicians, actors, dancers—on two interrelated projects: The Flaming Hair – Ritual for Poetry 燃燒的頭髮——爲了詩的祭典 and Dictionary of Chaos: Addendum 混沌詞典：補遺. Both works take as their textual point of departure a small corpus of Japanese- and Chinese-language poetry produced by members of the short-lived surrealist Le Moulin Poetry Society 風車詩社, founded by Taiwanese poet Yang Chichang 楊熾昌 in 1933 in Tainan. The resulting multimedia performances were assembled in a manner reminiscent of the surrealist cadavre exquis, combining elements of object theatre, noise art, butoh dance, and installation art, among others. In this paper, I focus on the productions' aural dimension—a cacophony of sounds recorded or produced on site, yet never reducible to mere recitation—to explore how auditory estrangement functions as a method for confronting the linguistic and creative constraints embedded in Taiwan's colonial and nationalist periods.

[518] Emily Teo (KU Leuven), Brian Lander (Brown University), Sunkyu Lee (KU Leuven), Sophie Volpp (UC Berkeley), Hilde De Weerdt (KU Leuven), Dawn Zhuang (KU Leuven), Wangzhi Xi (KU Leuven) and Yuan-Heng Mao (IISH, Amsterdam). *New Perspectives on Chinese Infrastructural History.*
**Abstract.** In this double panel we aim to bring together scholars of Chinese fiction, travel writing, cartography, epigraphy, and historical writing to discuss early modern Chinese and, to some extent, European conceptual histories and discourses of what we now call infrastructures. This double panel consists of two parts, with the first part focused on the comparison of the conceptualization of walls, roads, bridges, and other infrastructures across different media and in distinct genres in which infrastructures have had a distinct albeit all-too-often ignored visibility. The second part focuses on the social, economic, and environmental history of infrastructural repair and disrepair, comprising an explanation of the design and the results of a longue-durée history of infrastructural renovation and its commemoration, and an analysis of the causes given for infrastructural events including construction and renovation as well as destruction and the failure of planned projects.
The presenters engage with critical infrastructure studies, exploring and expanding key questions that have emerged in debates surrounding the infrastructure turn including the conceptualization of public works vs

infrastructure, the socially constructed nature of the visibility and the invisibility of infrastructures, the expression of social relations and power dynamics at different scales in the construction, renovation and commemoration of infrastructural projects, and practices of place-making at various scales. They will also discuss digital and analog methods for bringing text, material and visual objects into productive dialogue.
**Keywords:** critical infrastructure studies, multimodal sources, late imperial China

**Emily Teo (KU Leuven)** – *"Very Great and Mightily Walled": Late Imperial Material Infrastructure and their Textual Construction in Travel Accounts*
"Very great and mightily walled" were the opening lines of Galeote Pereira's account of Fuzhou. Early modern European travel accounts frequently characterised Chinese cities as monumental, well-governed, and meticulously ordered. Missionaries and merchants drew from diverse sources—including Chinese maps, local gazetteers, and their own lived experiences to describe imposing city walls and gates, regulated streets, and densely organised commercial quarters. These descriptions did more than convey empirical detail; they transformed Ming urban material sites into textual evidence of a polity defined by administrative competence and social discipline. In this paper, I present a series of Chinese and European travel accounts from 1550 to 1700, paying attention to textual and visual representations of material infrastructure—ranging from descriptions of well-built city gates, to ruined walls caused by warfare, to failed bridges and roads. In doing so, I consider the processes through which observations of material infrastructure was selectively adapted, translated and occasionally imaginatively embellished. I approach travel accounts as complex historical sources that communicated lived experiences and observations, while also being shaped by concerns about literary form, travellers' motivations, and readership. I argue that travellers' descriptions were not merely straightforward records about the size, scale, and condition of late imperial material infrastructure. They presented subjective viewpoints ranging from scathing critique to effusive praise and were often political commentaries about the state and governance. Through these examples, I show that travellers paid close attention to infrastructure, perceiving it as an indicator of effective statecraft.
**Brian Lander (Brown University)** – *Environmental history in the 1636 Complete Book on Water Conservancy in Wu*
Because water control tends to function better if organized across large areas, it is an aspect of the human manipulation of the landscape that often involves states, which tend to keep good records. China's abundant records of water control are excellent source materials, but often lead environmental historians to focus less on environmental change than on the sociopolitical and engineering problems that concerned the authors of these texts. This paper will analyze the Complete Book on Water Conservancy in Wu, compiled by Ming official Zhang Guowei, to see what it can tell us about the ecology of the Lake Tai drainage system at the end of the Ming. This poorly-drained but fertile region contained a dense network of waterways that were managed through a complex system of interconnected dikes, dams, ditches, canals, and water gates. The Complete Book includes almost fifty maps of waterways, which are depicted at different scales, from the whole region down to prefectures, counties, and towns. These not only provide a remarkably detailed picture of the region, but are essential for making sense of the wealth of detail in the text. The book includes both chapters penned by Zhang and a valuable compilation of historical texts from a variety of genres related to water control. Even if we ignore the wealth of other information on Ming Jiangnan, the Complete Book alone makes the region's environment among the best-documented in the world four centuries ago, which is not surprising since it was also among the most thoroughly humanized.
**Sunkyu Lee (KU Leuven)** – *Visualizing City Walls and Material Changes in Late Imperial China*
This paper investigates how maps captured physical changes to city walls—damage, repair, and transformation—while shaping their meanings. Amid geopolitical crises and increasing environmental disasters, many traditional earthen walls were refortified with stone and brick. Gazetteer maps not only recorded these material shifts but also conveyed distinct local concerns and perspectives.
Drawing on more than 200 city wall maps (chengtu) from county-level gazetteers of Shandong, Shanxi, Sichuan, and Fujian, the study traces how representations of city walls evolved between 1500 and 1910. Using the digital annotation platform IMMARKUS, Wang Ran, Pascal van der Bij, and I annotated these maps. The maps were then compared with construction and repair events of the same city walls, reconstructed from commemorative inscriptions through COMARKUS and XMARKUS—a collaborative effort by Hilde De Weerdt, Sander Molenaar, Yuan-Heng Mao, Cundao Li, and me. With the assistance of Dawn Zhuang and Wangzhi Xi, the analysis reveals a growing visual emphasis on wall materiality in response to a broader shift toward masonry structures.
The paper further examines regional variations in depicting defensive features such as barbicans and bastions, as well as shrines and hydrological facilities attached to city walls, to explore how these reflected differing material, environmental, and social practices. In doing so, it argues that cartography actively shaped knowledge and

understandings of urban infrastructure in late imperial China.

**Sophie Volpp (UC Berkeley)** – *Infrastructure in The Story of the Stone and in Fiction Commentary*

This paper analyzes the treatment of infrastructure in Cao Xueqin's mid-eighteenth century novel The Story of the Stone, also known as The Dream of the Red Chamber. I examine the increasing visibility of various forms of infrastructure as the novel progresses, in particular, the networks of servants, in order to ask how a critical approach to the novel could be informed by infrastructure studies. The infrastructure that makes possible the lives of enormous privilege led by the Jia family at the center of the novel is obscured in the novel's early chapters. By the novel's midpoint, however, the narrative unveils and at times spotlights the infrastructure that supports the extravagant lifestyle of the Jias.

My goal is ultimately to ask how reading for infrastructure might provide an alternative to the structuralist forms of reading that have dominated the study of the Ming-Qing novel. Ming fiction commentary focused on revealing the underlying structure of long-form fiction. The contemporary criticism of Ming-Qing fiction had its genesis at a time when structuralism provided one of the dominant modes of reading fiction. This happy coincidence led critics to approach Ming-Qing fiction through the lens of traditional fiction commentary without questioning the nature of that lens, and to view traditional commentary through principles compatible with a structuralist reading, for example, the alternation of "heat" and "cold". How might our critical principles change were we to re-envision structure as infrastructure, and to re-think Ming-Qing fiction and fiction commentary from the point of view of infrastructure?

**Hilde De Weerdt (KU Leuven)** – *Comparing Social and State Investment in Local Infrastructure and Its Commemoration in Late Imperial Chinese History*

In this paper I will discuss a time series mapping the ability of local communities and the state to invest in the construction and renovation of different types of infrastructures simultaneously. I will discuss the spatial and temporal distribution of infrastructural investment across the geographic space occupied by the three modern provinces of Shandong, Sichuan, and Fujian, thus covering distinct parts of the Chinese territories. Even though most of the local gazetteers that serve as our sources date to the Ming and Qing dynasties, the events recorded in these sources date back to earlier times, allowing us to investigate cases of concentrated infrastructural investment from the eleventh century onwards for these areas. Given the nature of our source base, inscriptions transcribed into local gazetteers commemorating the construction and renovation of city walls, bridges, and roads, our analysis is to a significant extent an analysis of the capacity and interest of local and state agents to give material expression to the commemoration of infrastructural events in stone monuments. Because their creators were motivated to include detail about cost, labour, sponsorship and project organization in various forms, these sources, in combination with the methods we designed to create infrastructural events with a broad range of attributes from them, also give us avenues to explore when, how, and why some communities invested in the construction and repair of public works more so than others. This analysis builds on collective research undertaken at KU Leuven and IISH Amsterdam, including Dr. Lee Sunkyu, Dr. Sander Molenaar, Dr. Mao Yuan-Heng, Ph D candidates Xi Wangzhi, Li Cundao, and Dawn Zhuang.

**Dawn Zhuang (KU Leuven)** – *From Source Alignment to Linked Data: Ontologies and Data Models for Chinese Infrastructural History*

This paper examines how the design of ontologies and data models supports research on the long-term history of infrastructural renovation and its commemoration across heterogeneous sources in late imperial China. Building on domain expertise, we developed an integrated model that represents infrastructural objects, the events that affected them over time, the actors involved, and their depiction across historical maps and diagrams.

Translating this model into an ontology built on already widely implemented standards creates a coherent semantic framework that aligns inscriptions, historical maps, and archaeological diagrams. This internal coherence enables systematic cross-media comparison and supports the identification of recurring patterns in infrastructural history, including how repairs were organized and justified, how failures were framed, and how construction materials and techniques were described and represented.

The ontology is also designed with a linked data orientation. By linking entities to external databases such as the China Biographical Database (CBDB) and the Temporal Gazetteer (TGAZ), the model enables queries that relate infrastructural events to biographical and spatial networks, situating them within broader social and geographic configurations. Its compatibility with established linked data standards further opens possibilities for contributing historically documented infrastructural objects, actors, event relationships, and their visual representations to the Wikidata semantic infrastructure, strengthening the representation of local and regional historical knowledge. Together, these modeling practices offer a unified and extensible framework for exploring how infrastructures were

built, conceptualized, and remembered across time.

**Wangzhi Xi (KU Leuven)** – *Mapping Infrastructure Events: Retrospective Framing and the Present Intervention in Commemorative Inscriptions from Late Imperial China*

Commemorative inscriptions offer valuable materials for understanding how infrastructure-related events, including construction, renovation, destruction, and project failures, were recorded and explained in late imperial China. However, the analysis is often limited to isolated case studies. How is an inscription's narration of an object's past linked to its rendering of the intervention it was composed to mark? As part of a larger collaborative project on Chinese infrastructural history, this paper analyzes the relationship between retrospective narration and the present intervention in commemorative inscriptions for bridges, roads, and city walls. Working from a corpus of more than 640 inscriptions in which events and their properties have been identified and normalized through a collaborative effort by Hilde De Weerdt, Sander Molenaar, Sunkyu Lee, Yuan-heng Mao, and Cundao Li, it treats both the antecedent events an inscription records and the account it gives of the present intervention as narrative selections within a single commemorative act, and asks how the two are linked. What an inscription gives to the past, including the type of antecedent events it records and how much earlier history it carries, is bound up with how it presents the intervention, including its actors, attributed causes, materials, and other recorded properties, a pattern that emerges across the corpus rather than in single cases. By treating these inscriptions as sites of narrative selection, the analysis brings into a view of reading commemorative texts as records of how infrastructural events were remembered and explained.

**Yuan-Heng Mao (IISH, Amsterdam)** – *Partial Connectivity: Road Projects and Fragile Linkages in Ming and Qing China*

This paper examines the disconnectivity of roads in Ming and Qing China, a condition made visible in the commemorative inscriptions that accompanied roadwork. Although these infrastructure projects were intended to establish connections, the inscriptions often revealed how disconnection was experienced by the roads' various users, including residents, merchants, and officials. This study investigates how different actors experienced and navigated disconnection during travel and in their daily lives.

Commemorative inscriptions provide a distinctive perspective on this issue. On the one hand, they were often composed to affirm the government's or local communities' commitment to connectivity. On the other hand, they also recorded the obstacles that disrupted connectivity, including environmental constraints and other impediments to mobility. To analyze these dynamics, the study employed the digital annotation platforms ENTMARKUS and COMARKUS to create entities and infrastructural events from inscriptions. This enabled a combination of close reading and quantitative exploration in the X-MARKUS and MUNDa platforms. The investigation began with approximately 150 road inscriptions from Shanxi, Hebei, Henan, Shandong, Fujian, and Sichuan, with planned expansion to additional provinces. These inscriptions were collected by Ruiting Lu and me. The platforms' methodologies, data models, and datasets were developed collaboratively by Hilde De Weerdt, Sander Molenaar, Sunkyu Lee, Wangzhi Xi, Dawn Zhuang, Cundao Li, and me.

Moving beyond conventional narratives of connectivity, this study proposes that, rather than continuous political or economic integration, disconnectivity was a dominant feature of roads during the Ming and Qing that influenced many aspects of people's lives.

[525] Lin Xiao (Ecole Normale Supérieure of Paris), Meilan Zhang (Hong Kong Baptist University) and Richard VanNess Simmons (University of Hong Kong). *Linguistic Distance in Mandarin Dialectal Variation and its Implications for Diffusion Models: Empirical Approaches in Synchrony and Diachrony.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines how linguistic distance within the Mandarin dialectal domain influences diffusion pathways, structural convergence and contact-induced change. Although "Mandarin" is often regarded as a relatively homogeneous Sinitic branch, synchronic and diachronic empirical research reveals a much more complex landscape. Northern, Central and Southwestern varieties show significant divergences in phonology, syntax and lexicon. This raises questions about how innovations diffuse across space and time, how dialectal continua are maintained, and how standardization processes, notably the development of Modern Standard Mandarin, interact with pre-existing patterns of variation.

The panel brings together approaches from geolinguistics, areal typology, historical linguistics and quantitative variations to examine the multi-dimensions of linguistic distance: structural, perceptual and socio-geographic. Papers explore how measurable distances, such as phonetic similarity, morphosyntactic clustering and isoglossal lexical densities, correlate with known historical contact zones, migration histories and prestigious political centers. Particular attention will be paid to Beijing and its surrounding macro-region, where sustained contacts played a

decisive role in the formation of the standard language. Diachronic analyses will highlight how imperial administration, mobility along transport corridors and, later, the language policies of the Republic and the PRC reconfigured the dynamics of diffusion and altered the relative weight of local features.
This panel integrates synchronic evidence with diachronic reconstruction to refine models of linguistic diffusion in Mandarin and reassess the notion of "distance" as a multidimensional concept. Ultimately, it seeks to contribute to a broader theoretical understanding of how large, continuous dialect networks evolve under the combined pressures of contact and mobility.
**Keywords:** mandarin dialects, linguistic divergence and convergence models, Old Pekingese and Standard mandarin, corpus linguistics, computational sociolinguistics, geolinguidtics, Dialectometry, spatial statistics

**Lin Xiao (Ecole Normale Supérieure of Paris)** – *Contact, Distance, and the Making of Standard Mandarin: Empirical Evidence from Pekingese and Northern–Southern Interfaces*
This paper presents a model of the linguistic distance between different dialects of Mandarin, based on empirical data from both Northern and Southern contact zones. It builds upon some research outcomes exhibited in my two LALIES articles (2023 and 2025), as well as my invited lecture at the Société linguistique de Paris in 2025. After analyzing a number of native Chinese documents and others written by foreign missionaries, I argue that the emergence of Standard Mandarin cannot be understood through "Beijing-centered" diffusion alone. Rather, it resulted from long-term, multidirectional interactions involving Pekingese, Hebei–Shandong Mandarin, lower Yangtze varieties, and southwestern dialects associated with migration waves. Northern Mandarin lingua franca was far from being monolithic. Using phonological correspondences, lexical strata, and syntactic alignment features, I identify zones of reduced distance—areas in which centuries of mobility and koineization created structural convergence—as well as zones of resistant distance, where either southern features persisted or were selectively adopted. I pay special attention to the late Qing and Republican periods, when contact intensified and the Pekingese adopted innovations traceable to broader Mandarin and even non-Mandarin influences. I propose a diffusion model in which linguistic distance is both spatial and sociolinguistic. Prestige, demographic flows, and institutional standardization influence which features diffuse and which remain localized. This reconceptualization helps explain why Standard Mandarin retains northern phonology yet exhibits a grammar and lexicon with deeper southern origins. Ultimately, the paper reframes the internal evolution of Mandarin as a dynamic interplay of distance, contact, and standardization.
**Meilan Zhang (Hong Kong Baptist University)** – *Diachronic Perspectives on Northern Mandarin Distance: Textual Evidence from Late Imperial Sources*
This study examines the linguistic differences within Northern Mandarin using diachronic textual, lexical, and grammatical evidence from the Ming and Qing periods. Using Qing-dynasty vernacular fiction, regional dialect lexicons, and pedagogical materials for learning Mandarin from Western and Eastern countries, as well as Manchu–Chinese bilingual sources, I reconstruct patterns of variation prior to modern dialect surveys. These patterns subsequently influenced later dynamics of linguistic diffusion. The findings demonstrate that the Northern Mandarin lingua franca was not homogeneous. Even the Beijing Mandarin domain is internally differentiated in missionary writings: There is Southern Beijing Mandarin, as seen in Léon Wieger's materials from Xian County in Hejian Prefecture, and Northern Beijing Mandarin, as seen in Jos Mullie's descriptions of the Rehe region. These varieties constitute a set of competing standards centered on Beijing, Nanjing, and other regional administrative hubs. Comparing early works by Wieger, Mullie, and Thomas Wade with Qing-period vernacular fiction based on the Jilu Mandarin substrate, along with contemporary dialect evidence, reveals historical zones of language contact whose features remain visible in modern Northern Mandarin. I argue that shifts in political centers, changes in transportation networks, and administrative reforms have engendered cyclical patterns of dialect convergence and divergence. Thus, assessing diachronic linguistic distance requires integrating textual evidence with contemporary spatial and sociolinguistic models. This historical reconstruction clarifies why certain Northern features spread rapidly throughout the Sinitic domain while others remained locally confined, thereby enriching contemporary models of linguistic diffusion.
**Richard VanNess Simmons (University of Hong Kong)** – *Waterways, Urban Standards, and Regional Koines in Late Imperial China: Insights from Old Hangzhou*
This paper reexamines the relationship between linguistic distance and diffusion dynamics in Mandarin and non-Mandarin regions by tracing the development of urban koines in Late imperial China. It uses Old Hangzhou as a case study. Using recordings and descriptions of Laopai Hanzhouhua (Old-Style Hangzhou Speech) from the 1980s—one of the last records of the city's premodern linguistic profile—I explore how traditional urban environments

fostered local standards that functioned as regional koines during the Song, Yuan, and Ming. Modern Hangzhou has grown far beyond its historical borders, absorbing former rural districts and altering the linguistic landscape. Yet, earlier stages of the dialect reveal a more unified urban variety that once served as a prestige norm across the surrounding region. This is similar to other regional koines, such as the Báihuà
based on Guangzhou Cantonese. It also resembles the northern Hebei dialect continuum (the You-Yan and Bao-Tang areas), which shares many features with the Beijingese. The paper argues that waterways (rivers, canals, lakes, etc.) played a decisive role in facilitating contact and mobility, thereby promoting the diffusion of urban linguistic features. Therefore, linguistic distance must be understood not only structurally, but also in relation to social geography and hydrological networks. For instance, the Grand Canal served as the primary conduit for the spread of Nanjing and Jiang-Huai dialect features into Beijing from the early fifteenth century on. By examining the emergence and interaction of koines with local varieties, the study emphasizes the significance of transportation-based connectivity in comprehending dialect convergence.

[526] Yang Lei (Inalco), Dayton Lekner (Ca' Foscari), Ling Zhang (State University of New York, Purchase College) and Nan Hu (University of Malta). *Sound, Media, and Emotion in 20th-Century China.*

**Abstract.** Amidst China's twentieth-century transformations, marked by revolutions, wars, and the rapid expansion of mass media, this panel explores how sound and emotion, though often ephemeral and elusive, were documented, mediated, and imagined. It begins with two guiding questions: how did different media such as photography, film, text, and radio register, represent, or simulate sonic and affective experience? And how did these media generate emotional intimacy or distance across political, religious, intercultural, and everyday settings? Case studies range from 1920s pilgrimage ethnographies to early Chinese sound cinema in the 1930s, from emotional attachments to radio technologies to the voice work of dubbed foreign films after 1949. Together, they highlight how sound was not merely heard but became a medium of belonging, exclusion, devotion, or dissent—both deeply felt and politically encoded. Some papers examine how "silent media", like photos, diaries, and travel writings, conjured imagined soundscapes or affective presence. Others explore how sonic technologies, including film soundtracks, dubbing, radio, and accent, served as vectors of ideology, memory, and affect across linguistic and social boundaries. Combining insights from history, anthropology, film, and religious studies, this panel foregrounds a shared methodological concern: how the intersection of sound studies and the history of emotions might offer new ways of thinking Chinese modernity. Rather than treating sound as a technical artifact, we approach it as a historically mediated and affectively charged category of experience. Through this lens, we seek to understand how individuals in twentieth-century China heard, felt, and remembered a rapidly changing world.
**Keywords:** sound, media, emotion, 20th century China, pilgrimage, sound cinema, radio, dubbed films, Intimacy, embodied experience, soundscape, social realism

**Yang Lei (INALCO)** – *Reconstructing Sonic Experience and Emotional Resonance at Mount Miaofeng (1924–1930)*
This article examines how auditory experience can be reconstructed through non-sonic media in the absence of recording technologies, and what such reconstructions reveal about the entanglement of sound, affect, and faith in early twentieth-century China. Focusing on Mount Miaofeng, a major pilgrimage site dedicated to the deity Bixia Yuanjun on the northwestern outskirts of Beijing, the study analyzes a diverse corpus of textual and visual sources produced between 1924 and 1930, including pilgrimage guides, ethnographic reports, photographs, and silent documentaries. These materials collectively evoke the soundscape of Mount Miaofeng across three interrelated registers: natural, social, and emotional. Such sounds both marked social distinctions and fostered affective connections. The ritual bell, for instance, was rung to welcome pilgrims at roadside teahouses but not the visiting researchers. Yet even as outsiders, both Chinese and foreign scholars could still respond to the sincerity and joy embedded in pilgrims' chants, ritual music, spoken blessings, and ambient sounds. Through these reconstructions of listening, their writings and images reveal how sonic experience could forge emotional connections that transcended social and cultural boundaries. By reading these mediated evocations of sound, the article argues that early twentieth-century scholars sought to move beyond institutional description toward an affective and embodied understanding of popular religion. It proposes "listening" as an interpretive framework for historical inquiry, one that illuminates the emotional foundations of pilgrimage and the sensory modes through which spiritual life was experienced and represented during a period of profound social transformation.
**Ling Zhang (State University of New York, Purchase College)** – *Hearing Homelessness: Sonic Pathos and Social Realism in Lambs Astray (1936)*
This paper examines how non-verbal sonic elements, such as musical motifs and atmospheric sound effects conjure emotions and political critique in early Chinese sound cinema. Centering on the soundscape of Lambs Astray (Mitu

de gaoyang, dir. Cai Chusheng, 1936), a late-silent and early partial-sound film, I analyze how its carefully crafted soundscape mobilizes pathos to draw public attention to the plight of homeless children and to articulate an indictment of social injustice. While the film's sonic aesthetic resonates with transnational inspirations such as the Soviet film Road to Life (1931, dir. Nicolai Ekk) and Chaplin's City Lights (1931), these traces are reworked into a distinctly local and politically charged acoustic form. Lambs Astray thus exemplified a transitional and transnational mode of sound practice. China's shift from silent to sound filmmaking (1931-1937) unfolded unevenly, shaped by economic constraints, technological limitations, and the intensifying crises of semi-colonialism and Japanese invasion. Within this turbulent milieu, leftist filmmakers developed an unruly audiovisual aesthetic that interwove silent-era techniques with emerging sound technologies. Lambs Astray deploys music and sound effects to sonically render a world of poverty, displacement, and class inequality through affective reverberation rather than verbal address. Situated at the intersection of Hollywood-dominated mediasphere and leftist cultural resistance and remediation, the film embodies the contradictions of colonial modernity. By foregrounding its sonic textures and their emotional resonance, this paper argues that Lambs Astray reveals how early Chinese sound cinema mobilized sound and affect as tools of social consciousness, embedding political urgency within unruly acoustic forms.

**Nan Hu (University of Malta)** – *Weeping for the Foreigners: The Politics of Emotions in Dubbed Films (1949-1976)*

Since the release of the first dubbed foreign film Private Alexander Matrosov in the People's Republic of China (PRC), dubbed foreign films have long served as a form of national pedagogy in socialist China. They helped Chinese audiences understand socialism and its role in world history, and fostered a sense of transnational solidarity with Soviet Union and other socialist allies during the Cold War years. Yet the mechanisms through which these pedagogical effects were produced remain underexamined. Focusing on the practices of two major dubbing studios—Shanghai Studio and Changchun Studio—from 1949 to 1976, and examining not only how foreign films were dubbed but also how they were received, this article retheorizes dubbing as a process of producing and transmitting emotion. It argues that the Chinese project of dubbing foreign films realized its full potential as an emotive, and even affective, medium. Dubbing voices reached audiences not only through articulated meanings and ideological messages, but also through embodied emotions—voices "lined with flesh"—that generated resonances among the screened bodies, the vocal performances, and the watching and listening bodies of viewers. By reconceptualizing dubbing as a management of heart and body, this article also seeks to enrich current understandings of dubbing within audiovisual translation studies.

**Dayton Lekner (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)** – *"I Can't Live Without My Radio" : Media, Emotion and Intimacy in China, 1949-1992*

Why do we listen to the radio? For information? To be connected to an imagined community? In histories of broadcast in 20th century China, scholars have stressed the ability of radio to unite geographically and culturally diverse populations (Lei 2019), convey information (Alekna 2024), or echo ideology (Li, 2020), what of its emotional conductivity? In this paper, drawing on diaries, memoirs, and letters from listeners to radio stations from 1949-1992, I explore how radio was incorporated into the emotional and intimate world of its audience. The research reveals that while CCP broadcasting leadership imagined the new media of radio as a tool of emotional and ideological mobilization that would unite the "listening masses" 聽眾, the individual reception of radio broadcast was anything but unified. Listeners fell in love with the voices of announcers; became emotionally attached to particular broadcasts; became despondent if their device broke; tested their bodies against the demands of radio calisthenics; and deployed the radio itself as a gift, a dowry, or a status symbol. Reception, or lack thereof, became a marker of civilization and its other. The paper explores these diverse responses to the technology of radio by way of developing a Chinese voice in the global history of technology and culture. It re-imagines the media not as a channel by which propaganda flowed, but as, like the devices of today, an appendix with which we both expand and limit what it means to be human.

[528] Andrei Gomouline (Independent Scholar). *Within the System, Beyond the State: The Taixue Student Protest of 2 BCE.*

**Abstract.** In the first year of the Yuanshou 元壽 era (2 BCE), students of the Imperial Academy Taixue 太學 staged what may be the first recorded student protest in history. When the Director of Retainers Bao Xuan 鮑宣 was arrested for publicly humiliating the Chancellor Kong Guang 孔光 by stopping his subordinates from using the imperial highway and confiscating their carriages, more than a thousand students blocked the Chancellor's way and demanded Bao's release. Emperor Ai 哀帝 commuted Bao's death sentence to hard labor and exile; notably, no punishment imposed on the students is mentioned. The reasons and implications of this demonstration are the focus of the proposed paper. Why did the students march? To defend moral justice, to protect an upright and

principled official, or, possibly, to act in part out of a deeper alienation from the state they were trained to serve? By this time, Taixue had grown into a vast institution, yet only a tiny fraction of its students ever reached positions in the central government. While cultivating imperial orthodoxy, it remained socially detached from power. Thousands of students, mostly sons of minor officials, were maintained by the state but excluded from advancement, forming a dense community of educated men without political outlet – a configuration that would continue to shape the political culture of the Han 漢 literati and still later.

**Keywords:** Taixue (Imperial Academy), Student Protest, Han Education System, Bureaucratic Recruitment, Social Mobility and Elite Formation, Moral Agency

[529] Rogier Creemers (Leiden University), Vincent Brussee (Leiden University), Ariane Ollier-Malaterre (Université du Québec à Montréal), Emilie Szwajnoch (University of Silesia in Katowice) and Una Bērziņa-Čerenkova (Riga Stradinš University). *Imagined China: How China myths are produced and circulated between public discourse and scholarship.*

**Abstract.** What explains the proliferation of China-related myths in public debate, policy discourse and scholarship? How can we address this problem? Amidst the abundance of China-focused research, one might expect academic and public understanding of Beijing to be more nuanced than ever. Yet Chinese initiatives and policies continuously give rise to myths and imaginaries disconnected from reality. This three-paper panel examines specific instances of such myths to investigate the empirical and interpretive barriers impeding higher-quality research on China, as well as the mechanisms of scholarly knowledge production and misinformation.

The first paper explores the shortcomings of academic inquiry by juxtaposing Western discourse surrounding several initiatives associated with China, including the Digital Silk Road, with how they actually unfold. The second and third papers turn to the case of the Social Credit System (SCS), analyzing the myth around it from two distinct perspectives: the epistemology of research and the processes of misinformation production. The epistemological paper examines how underlying assumptions and prevailing narratives shape scholars' knowledge production on contemporary China. The misinformation-focused paper looks at what features characterize the SCS myth, how it emerged and spread across Western sources, and what underlying mechanisms led to its creation and dissemination. Afterwards, a discussant will guide the reflection on the broader questions that emerge from these inquiries.

Overall, the panel addresses the problem of what shapes knowledge production on China and how it can be improved – questions especially salient at the moment of heightened international tensions.

**Keywords:** China myths, Epistemology of China research, Scholarly knowledge production, Misinformation processes, Social Credit System, Digital Silk Road

**Rogier Creemers (Leiden University)** – *The Digital Silk Road and Other Mythical Creatures: Explaining Persistent Erroneous Beliefs about Chinese Policy*

Both in the academic literature and in wider popular and policy discourse, there is a wide range of commonsensical assertions about the way Chinese authorities make and implement policy. However, this paper will argue that many of these assertions are either factually wrong, or contain significant interpretive shortcomings. First, it will use several case studies from the realm of digital and technology policy to identify the contrast between common narratives about them and their factual substance or alternative interpretive approaches. These case studies will include the Digital Silk Road, the Social Credit System, China's regulatory offensive against the platform industry in 2021-22 and New IP. Subsequently, it will explore possible explanations for this distance. These include material limitations on obtaining empirical data or information from China, interpretive limitations where dominant theoretical paradigms privilege certain explanations over others, and analytical challenges arising from the political economy of knowledge production about prominent aspects of contemporary Chinese governance.

Within the broader context of the proposed panel, this paper will set the stage by highlighting the question what it takes to analyse contemporary Chinese statecraft rigorously, and discussing potential limitations and pitfalls not only to knowledge production, but also to dissemination within the academic community as well as wider stakeholder circles.

**Vincent Brussee (Leiden University)** – *How Hegemonic Media Narratives Shape China Scholarship: The Case of the Social Credit System*

Popular narratives have often depicted China's Social Credit System (SCS) as a dystopian, all-encompassing scoring regime. But to what extent has scholarship been able to produce knowledge autonomously from these problematic media narratives? Has it been able to offer a powerful counter-narrative to correct the record? This article

investigates how such narratives have shaped academic research on the SCS. It conducts a mixed-methods analysis of 53 peer-reviewed journal articles. It argues that hegemonic media discourses powerfully shape the types of questions scholars ask, primes the interpretation of empirical evidence, and fosters topical clustering. It further demonstrates that 25 out of 53 articles reproduce at least one aspect of the problematic media coverage without clear empirical basis, a challenge that even affects critical scholarship. These dynamics have constrained scholarly interpretations and responsiveness to policy change, while also reinforcing a control–resistance binary that sidelines other areas of inquiry, such as market regulation or technical infrastructures. In this way, media narratives can become self-reinforcing in scholarship. At the same time, popular narratives have given SCS research visibility, urgency, and funding. The article argues that these dynamics are not unique to the SCS but illustrate broader epistemic and empirical challenges in China Studies, especially when researching politicized and fast-evolving policy domains.

Within the panel, this paper serves as a micro-level case study that reflects on questions like positionality and the interaction between scholarly knowledge production and public discourse.

**Emilie Szwajnoch (University of Silesia in Katowice) and Ariane Ollier-Malaterre (Université du Québec à Montréal),** – *Birth of a Western Chimera: The Social Credit System and Beyond*

Concerns related to digital authoritarianism in Europe and elsewhere, as well as tensions between China and the U.S. or EU countries, raise interest in China among analysts, journalists, politicians, and the general public. While this interest may foster high-quality analyses on China, it might also amplify misinformation, as in the case of the Social Credit System (SCS) at the core of the government's Planning Outline for the construction of the SCS for the years 2014–2020. The SCS has been abundantly depicted by Western journalists, politicians, and others as an Orwellian tool assigning a score to each citizen and tracking their activities algorithmically, whereas later research documented its fragmented, disparate and relatively analog nature compared with other Chinese surveillance systems. How has such a chimera (i.e., a monstrous fabrication of the mind, in reference to Homer's Chimera) possibly emerged and spread among Western journalists, analysts, academics, and the public? Through systematic coding of a rigorously stratified sample of 205 social media posts, 97 press articles, 70 think tank publications, and 34 academic articles published between 2014 and 2020, this study analyzes the 1) elements of narration (e.g., metaphors, simplifications, references to politics), 2) roles of the actors and 3) contextual factors that have nurtured the SCS chimera. It then theorizes how chimeras develop at the intersection of discourses produced by different actors partaking in knowledge production and factors such as the trial nature of the first SCS pilots, divergent local sources of information, translation gaps, insufficient fact-checking, and geopolitical tensions.

[531] Vittorio Tantucci (Lancaster University) and Carlotta Sparvoli (Ca' Foscari University of Venice). *AI conversation (including Chinese) is too 'stereotypical': Is human creativity at risk?.*

People constantly imitate one another during interactions. We align with others' behaviour because of priming (Pickering & Garrod 2021), the automatic tendency to replicate the inputs that we receive from other people. We also imitate others' actions to pursue social conformity (Cialdini & Goldstein 2004). Most importantly we imitate others as a form of social engagement (Tantucci & Wang 2022). Re-using and re-combining other peoples' utterances is defined as resonance (Du Bois 2014; Tantucci 2023) and AI proved to be really good at that (Tantucci & Sparvoli 2025). We found that AI can reproduce social engagement in human interaction, but it tends to do so in stereotypical ways. While it can simulate (and even exaggerate) dialogic resonance and involvement in what an interlocutor says, its lexicon is less diverse. At the level of speech acts, directives are more repetitive and less varied, and tend to follow fixed patterns such as *request > commissive future* (Sparvoli & Peng 2026), rather than unfolding through the kind of local negotiation between speaker and addressee that is typical of human interaction. Most importantly AI struggles to represent 'conversational uniqueness', that is ways to interact that are not just plausible or conventional but make one conversation distinctive. We discovered this after analysing dialogic resonance, recombinant creativity, relevance acknowledgement (the acknowledgement of what an interlocutor said; Tantucci & Lepadat 2024) and other conversational engagement variables from a sampled section of the CallHome Corpus of Chinese telephone conversations. After feeding ChatGPT with speakers' demographics and contextual information we asked it to reproduce telephone interactions among Chinese family members. We then fitted a conditional mixed effects Bayesian regression comparing the two datasets. We found that AI over-generalises and rhetorically 'flattens' human dialogue. It provides a stereotypical way of conversing but shows scarce flexibility in including 'atypical' and unconventional utterances which are in turn constitutive of real human interactions. In the long run this raises concerns that AI's formulaic style could gradually reduce the creativity and uniqueness of human conversation.

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**Keywords:** AI, Pragmatics, Resonance, Recombinant creativity

[532] Yixuan Huang (The University of Edinburgh), Beth Price (The University of Edinburgh) and Leshan Li (Heidelberg University). *Women's Bodies as Ideological Instruments: Colonialism, Pain, and Progress in Twentieth Century China.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines how women's bodies have been transformed into symbolic vehicles in various visual media, including Republican pictorials, Maoist theatre, and Hong Kong cinema. It explores how these transformations articulated competing visions of modernity and rival claims to political and institutional authority throughout China's turbulent twentieth century. Beth Price examines how images of black and indigenous female nudity imported colonial regimes into Chinese visual culture through Republican Shanghai pictorials. By aligning Chinese viewers with whiteness against racialised female "others", these pictorials imagine a semi-colonial yet self-colonising modern China. Leshan Li argues that revolutionary theatre weaponised the female body as physical evidence of embodied suffering, collapsing varied oppressors into the umbrella term "old society" for ideological convenience. In this schema, the tragic female body becomes the emotional infrastructure of revolutionary legitimacy and political authority.Yixuan Huang examines Hong Kong commercial films(1980s-1990s), comparing female inspectors and a female triad boss. Although they inhabit ostensibly opposed legal and criminal systems, their masculinised bodies are organisationally positioned in an in-between gender category, not to open up queer possibilities but to stabilise patriarchal hierarchies. Together, this panel illuminates a pattern: whether through racialized nudity, revolutionary martyrdom, or institutional masculinization, women's bodies consistently serve as the canvas upon which ideological projects inscribe their visions of progress. Each case study reveals how apparent advancement—Republican modernisation, revolutionary liberation, or workplace inclusion—masks sophisticated mechanisms of control. It shows that modern institutions repeatedly instrumentalise women's bodies to assert authority, structure hierarchies and reshape collective identities.
**Keywords:** Chinese visual culture, gender and embodiment, body politics

**Beth Price (University of Edinburgh)** – *Imitation and Identity: Semi-Colonial and Self-Colonising Narratives in Republican Shanghai Pictorials*

This paper explores how editors, artists, and cartoonists in three Republican Shanghai pictorials – Linglong, Liangyou, and Shidai Manhua – used images of black and indigenous female nudity to convey ideas about gender, race, and socio-cultural hierarchies, thereby asserting China's "modernity." It argues that Republican intellectuals deliberately employed colonial visual narratives through art, photography, and cartoons in order to prove that Chinese people were closer to whiteness than to other races.

By the 1930s, female nudity in Republican periodicals was no longer simply used for shock value, instead used by editors and artists to educate and "modernise" readers. White bodies were idealised, whereas non-white, non-Chinese bodies were exoticised through the use of colonial narratives and racist stereotypes. Through a close analysis of images featured in these three periodicals, this paper reveals a sustained, deliberate association of nudity with barbarism and racial inferiority. Taken as a case study, these periodicals reveal broader intellectual intentions towards a range of Chinese audiences: women for Linglong, men for the satirical Shidai Manhua, and a young urban audience for Liangyou. Whether through utopian depictions of non-Western societies in primitivist art reproductions and photomontage features or through caricatures emphasising the 'savagery' of African and Indigenous peoples, editors and artists adopted colonial narratives and racist stereotypes.

Ultimately, this paper illustrates how the emulation and adoption of this visual framework resulted in the development of a semi-colonial and self-colonising culture. Republican intellectuals idealised white femininity and accepted the inferiority of the racialised "Other," all under the guise of "modernity."

**Leshan Li (Heidelberg University)** – *Conquering Death: Pain and the Emotional Foundations of Revolutionary Legitimacy in Maoist Theatre*

Through close readings of Put Down Your Whip (1931), Blood and Tears of Hatred (1947), and Sister Jiang (1964), this paper interrogates why the Chinese revolution required female pain—not simply as a consequence of violence, but as a condition for revolutionary truth. These performances did not merely represent gendered suffering; they

organized it as morally intelligible and politically necessary. Women's bodies became symbolic vessels through which pain was sanctified and resurrection dramatized collective salvation. Pain, death, and resurrection formed the symbolic structure through which revolutionary legitimacy was articulated by defining their meaning, staging their progression, and envisioning their resolution. This emotional structure coexisted with, but remained distinct from, institutional or procedural claims to legitimacy. Within this framework, the capacity to confront and resolve suffering functioned as a core criterion of revolutionary authority. The figure who could endure pain, overcome death, and promise redemption was positioned as the legitimate political subject, and women stood at the center of this symbolic order. Death was not depicted as the end of political life, but as its defining site; resurrection marked the revolution's exclusive capacity to redeem it. Drawing on theories of political religion and the history of emotion, I argue that Maoist theatre instrumentalized women's embodied suffering to generate emotional credibility and to present the revolution as the only force capable of confronting—and ending—human suffering.

**Yixuan Huang (University of Edinburgh)** – *When Institutions Demand Cross-Dressing: Women's Quasi-Masculinity as Organizational Control in Hong Kong Cinema, 1960s-1990s*

Cross-dressing has long fascinated cinema audiences as a powerful symbol of gender transgression, identity fluidity and personal liberation. Yet in Hong Kong action films, women's cross-dressing tells a different story, challenging any straightforward reading of it as an expression of gender fluidity. This paper analyses cross-dressed female protagonists situated in two sharply contrasting institutional settings within two popular film cycles: the "girls-with-guns" police films inaugurated by Yes, Madam! (1985) and the 1990s Young and Dangerous triad cycle, focusing on Portland Street Blues (1998), which centres on Hong Kong's only female triad leader. Although one cycle is set in the legal world of the Hong Kong Police Force and the other in the illicit world of triad societies, both settings constitute masculinist hierarchies that demand gender conformity. In these male-dominated organisations, the representations of female inspectors and the female triad leader cast femininity into shadow while highlighting masculinity: they wear masculinised clothing, carry handguns and exercise decision-making and command power. Reading these representations of masculine women alongside the contemporaneous political stances and agendas of Hong Kong women's organisations, the paper argues that their cross-dressing is framed as a condition imposed by institutions that, under pressure from women's movements, can no longer bar women from positions of command yet require them to look and act "like men" to in charge. The films thus stage inclusion while keeping the gender order intact, deploying women's approximation to masculinity to manage anxiety about female entry into the core of state power.

[533] Xiaoyu Zhang (University of York), Sanna Eriksson (University of York), Ran Yan (Shenzhen University), Min Xu (Durham University) and Jie Lei (Shenzhen Polytechnic University). *Chinese neoliberal gendered subjects in the making on TV: Post-2020s discourses, representation, and negotiation.*

**Abstract.** Television, as a crucial vehicle of mass cultural consumption in China, serves as a key arena for the production and reproduction of social meanings. This panel explores how television dramas engage with and reflect the dynamic processes of social structural transformation in China, while also examining their role in reshaping the identity formation and social positioning of gendered subjects. Our panel adopts an interdisciplinary research approach, integrating diverse theoretical frameworks and methodological perspectives to conduct a comprehensive analysis of various television drama genres. The study employs methods such as textual analysis, critical discourse analysis, and audience studies to explore the roles and impacts of television dramas in narrative structuring, ideological construction, and the production of socio-cultural meanings. The four papers address a range of issues: How do televisual narratives construct gendered subjects aligning with the patriarchal, neoliberalising state? How do these processes contribute to the broader Chinese Dream project? How is resistance formed among viewers and in texts? This panel investigates the construction of meanings in television dramas as a dynamic process involving both the production and reception sides. We also include analyses of both female and male images on small screens, offering a comparative framework. Our studies demonstrate how popular television culture responds to and negotiates sociopolitical transformations in contemporary China, while simultaneously reflecting and shaping the construction of modern citizenship and gendered subjectivities.

**Keywords:** TV dramas, Neoliberalism, Gender, Nation-building

**Xiaoyu Zhang (University of York)** – *Neoliberalism and media consumption: Reflection of female viewers on gender represented in Chinese TV Shows*

In the process through which the state advances social modernization and citizen subject formation by constructing its political and economic systems, how women—as a vital component of society—negotiate their position within

national developmental narratives and mechanisms of cultural production has become an important question. With the deep integration of television dramas with emerging digital platforms, television has increasingly become a key arena for the dissemination of state ideology and the production of gendered discourses. Taking media consumption as a point of entry and centering the subjective experiences of female audiences, this study examines how contemporary Chinese women, situated within the historical context of simultaneous institutional development and cultural marketization, engage with television dramas to reflect upon, negotiate, and reconstruct their social identities. Using the popular series Ode to Joy (which has received over 1.2 billion views on the social media platform Xiaohongshu) as a case study, this research employs qualitative interviews and thematic analysis to explore how women aged 20 to 34 decode the show's narratives and how, within the interwoven logics of neoliberal governance and digital cultural practices, they rearticulate their gendered subjectivities. Drawing on Foucault's concept of biopower (1975), Hall's encoding/decoding model (1973), and Gibson's notion of affordance (2017), this study constructs an integrated analytical framework to reveal how female audiences interpret narratives of modern womanhood within the media environment. It further investigates how, through emotional expression and discursive interaction on social media platforms, individual viewing experiences are transformed into public negotiations of gender issues.

**Sanna Eriksson (University of York)** – *'It's for the children': Responsibilization of mothers in Chinese television dramas*

With the Chinese state's increasing concerns over declining birth rates and an aging population, mothers and women of childbearing age have become subjects of the state's pronatalist policies and propaganda. This involves not only a push for women to have (more) children but also promotion of dominant views in policy documents and media on how to raise these children. In this paper, I ask how television dramas are used as soft propaganda tools to promote certain kinds of mothering and how they are used to responsibilize mothers. I examine the responsibilization of women in their familial roles through feminist critical discourse analysis of two popular Chinese television dramas, Nothing but Thirty (2020) and A Love for Dilemma (2021), using Foucault's (1991; 1978) concepts of governmentality and biopower. Further, to highlight the gendered nature of governance of women through popular culture, I use Yuval-Davis' and Anthias' (1989) framework for women's gendered roles in the nation. I argue that women are depicted as self-responsible neoliberal citizen-subjects in both dramas and tasked with ensuring the survival of the family unit. As such, they are central to the state's project of national rejuvenation, which relies on social stability premised on family stability. Therefore, family-marriage television dramas play an important role in disseminating state messages to the general population about women's gendered roles and responsibilities in the nation.

**Ran Yan (Shenzhen University) & Jie Lei (Shenzhen Polytechnic University)** – *Historicised Pseudo-feminism: The Making of "Big Heroines" in Chinese Women-Oriented Historical Romance Dramas*

In light of the transnational circulation of postfeminist discourse, how Chinese historical romance dramas articulate a contemporary vision of postfeminism within the intersection of market forces, ideological control, and Chinese cultural specificity warrants closer scholarly attention. This paper examines the making of 'big heroines'—narratives spotlighting the growth of independent, ambitious female protagonists—in Chinese historical romance dramas. Through a discourse analysis of the female representations in Flourished Peony (2025) and its sequel In the Name of Blossom (2025), it interrogates how Chinese women-oriented historical romance dramas embed and negotiate postfeminist discourse within patriarchal historical frameworks. Drawing on Angela McRobbie's theorisation of 'double entanglement' and Fan Yang's analysis of China's 'pseudo-feminism' within the country's distinctive social-cultural and political terrain, the paper introduces the concept of 'historicised pseudo-feminism' to explain how such dramas incorporate feminist ideas of strength, independence, and entrepreneurship to appeal to a neoliberal female audience, while simultaneously situating gender inequality in the past, suggesting that contemporary collective feminist critique is redundant. Meanwhile, traditional gender roles are subtly reinforced through an emphasis on the 'nation-family' metaphor, in which women occupy supportive positions within men's nation-saving ambitions. The paper argues that Chinese women-oriented historical romance dramas pseudo-feminise womanhood in service of the national discourse of the Chinese Dream, aligning ideals of femininity with neoliberal and authoritarian state imperatives that cultivate properly gendered consumer-subjects and uphold heteronormative social harmony as part of nation-building.

**Min Xu (Durham University)** – *Ageing masculinities, northeast China, and cringe in the long season*

This paper investigates the portrayals of ageing masculinities in The Long Season, a TV crime-comedy series set in Northeast China (Dongbei). I argue that these gendered images debunk the patriarchal myth of 'successful ageing' while recentring masculinities in sympathetic terms, and this is carried out through imagery and narrative

conventions rooted in Dongbei's socio-cultural histories. Being the historical home to the nomadic Manchus and an industrial hub in Maoist China, Dongbei is traditionally connected to a tough, vigorous masculinity. However, since China's market reform turned Dongbei into the Rust Belt in the late 1990s, Dongbei has been associated with a 'low', comedic culture. I will demonstrate how The Long Season creates an aesthetic of 'ordinariness' through blending the crime drama format with a cringe aesthetic embedded in Dongbei's comedy tradition. This culturally valued pursuit of 'real-ness' is then realised through reinventing the Dongbei tough guy figure. During their amateur investigation, the senescent working-class men experienced the embodied process of ageing. They constantly fail to perform a tough, young, and heroic masculinity, appearing mundane and cringeworthy. 'Realism' is executed through dismissing an idealised, disembodied masculinity. However, the series eventually re-centres masculine subjects by positioning the 'cringy old men' as sympathetic witnesses and victims of Dongbei's postsocialist decline. I argue that the sympathetic portrayals of Dongbei masculinities articulate a postsocialist nostalgia that expresses ambivalent feelings for the ongoing marketisation and neoliberalisation.

[535] Valentina Lin Yang Yang (KU Leuven), Nicolas Standaert (KU Leuven), Arianna Magnani (Università degli Studi di Enna "Kore") and Ross Moncrieff (University of Oxford). *An Intercultural Book Circuit: Connecting Texts, People, and Knowledge between China and Europe.*

**Abstract.** Cultural contacts between China and Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries unfolded through an active intercultural circuit of books. Within this circuit, works from both sides were circulated, translated, and published in Chinese or in various European languages. This panel offers a multifaceted view of this world of circulation, tracing book movements from Europe to China and vice versa. It examines the trajectories of individual texts and the fate of entire libraries, highlighting the perspectives of the diverse agents who shaped these processes.

It will show that, as European books were translated into Chinese, these intercultural works entered private collections, becoming integrated into the collecting practices of local bibliophiles. Similarly, Chinese works made their way to Europe, circulating through the Republic of Letters into major and minor libraries, e.g. throughout Italy. The circulation of books not only brought new and unfamiliar physical volumes into existing libraries but also transferred new knowledge that shaped understandings of self and other. This is evident in the case of the British journey of Bencao gangmu, whose medical knowledge, mediated through merchant networks, introduced British readers to the practical wisdom of the Far East. Conversely, as European stories were reframed by Fujian compilers, new imagined bonds wove Chinese and peoples in the distant West together into a shared community.

Taken together, this panel sheds new light on the manifold ways in which book circulation contributed to the rise of a truly intercultural 'book world', connecting texts, people, and knowledge between China and Europe.

**Keywords:** Book circulation, Sino-European cultural interactions, Intercultural texts and libraries, Knowledge exchanges

**Nicolas Standaert (KU Leuven)** – *An Intercultural Book World: The Distribution of Sino-European Books in China (1582-c.1823)*

A unique characteristic of the cultural contacts between China and Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is the intercultural circuit of books that was established: European books travelling to China, and in return Chinese books travelling to Europe. Within this circuit, a large number of intercultural books was translated and published in Chinese or in European languages.

This presentation focuses on the Chinese pole of this cross-continental textual exchange, where the printing of Sino-European books was facilitated by the presence of a well-established print culture. It concentrates on the distribution of Sino-European books in the broad scholarly world: how did these books reach their potential readers? And how widely were these books distributed?

It does so by investigating the extent to which these books were included in private libraries from the late Ming until the mid-Qing (1582-c.1823). Thirty-seven of the still extant catalogues of these libraries contain references to Sino-European books. These references provide the opportunity to investigate the distribution of such intercultural texts over a span of two hundred and fifty years. It also gives insight into the ways the collectors classified these works in their catalogues. By investigating the bibliographic categories, this analysis reveals the intercultural negotiations that took place in the creation of the Sino-European book world.

**Arianna Magnani (Kore University of Enna)** – *Circulation of Chinese Books to Europe through the Lens of Smaller Italian Collections under Digitisation*

This paper offers insights into the dynamics of Chinese book circulation from the late Ming to the early Qing period, as reflected in European repositories. Specifically, it examines several lesser-known Italian collections of Chinese

books formed before the late eighteenth century which —unlike larger and internationally recognised holdings such as those of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma, the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, and the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana—have so far attracted limited scholarly attention. The study focuses on selected groups of Chinese texts associated with missionary activity in China, particularly in port cities such as Genoa in northern Italy and Palermo in the far south. It draws on materials preserved in the Biblioteca Universitaria di Genova and the Biblioteca Centrale della Regione Siciliana "A. Bombace", supplemented by the holdings of the Biblioteca Angelica in Rome, the latter being somewhat less renowned than other Roman archival institutions. Several of the case studies discussed have recently been digitised and made available online as part of the PRIN 2022 project 'M.A.R.E. – Manuscripts and Books from Asia Reaching Europe: A Semantically Enhanced Digital Library Mapping Asian Book Circulation along the Maritime Silk Routes', completed in February 2026. By integrating and comparing these collections with others that have already been digitised, it becomes possible to move from micro-level analyses of specific books and collections to macro-level visualisations of transregional flows, thereby enabling the identification of broader patterns in the early European circulation of Chinese books.

**Ross Moncrieff (Oxford University)** – *Manuscripts, Medicine and Merchants: The First English Translation of Li Shizhen's 李時珍 Bencao gangmu 本草綱目 (c. 1756)*

Missionaries understandably dominate discussion of the circulation of knowledge between Europe and China before 1800. But in certain areas, European merchants also made a sizeable contribution. This paper examines just such an occurrence, a previously unstudied English translation of Li Shizhen's famous materia medica, apparently done in Canton in the mid-eighteenth century and then sent to England as a present for an East India Company merchant. This makes it the earliest identified English translation of Li's work. The paper first examines the complex provenance of the manuscript, investigating its origins in the British China trade and identifying the moment of its transmission to England. It then examines the translation itself, arguing that it primarily focused on the Bencao's practical medical knowledge. For example, the English translation disregarded the 'explanation of names' 釋名 section of Li's entries, critical to Li's neo-Confucian project of properly defining the world's 'things' 物 in relation to each other and the cosmological 'pattern' 理; instead, the translation only included information from the more practically orientated 'collated explanations' 集解 and 'form and flavour' 氣味 sections. The paper concludes by situating this in a wider shift in British interests in Chinese medicine from a theoretical to an empirical focus, which in turning away from the more complex theoretical knowledge described by missionaries, enabled merchants to function as important conveyers of Chinese 'practical' wisdom.

**Valentina Yang (KU Leuven)** – *European Book Circulation and the Emergence of a Globally Oriented Imagined Community in Seventeenth-Century China*

The circulation of European (Christian) books to China in the seventeenth century introduced a range of previously unknown material into the Chinese book world. While scholarship has widely examined how European texts were adapted (or not) in this process, this paper highlights the experiences of local Chinese Christian communities and converts who engaged with this new material and contributed to its further circulation. It explores how the encounter between these two book worlds not only generated new intercultural forms of textual production but also left enduring effects on understandings of the self and the wider world. The works of the Fujian convert Li Jiugong (? – 1681) offer a valuable case to address this objective. Texts such as Lixiu yijian 勵修一鑑 and Wenxing cuichao 文行粹抄 formed rich, hybrid repositories of Chinese and European stories and knowledge, accompanied by commentaries and other paratexts. They provide a unique lens through which to observe how the compiler and his contributors absorbed and reflected upon ideas about the "distant" West and its peoples. Within this intercultural reality, this paper argues that the circulation of books and the resulting new reading experiences fostered perceptions of, and connections to, imagined communities—communities to which Chinese readers were not linked through tangible ties but through imagined bonds constructed by shared texts and values. Ultimately, a globally oriented community took shape, linking a local convert in Fujian to anonymous men in the Kingdom of Naples, to renown saints of the past.

[536] Natascha Gentz (The University of Edinburgh), Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik (University of Vienna), Di Zhang (The University of Edinburgh) and Shu Yang (Western Michigan University). *Secrecies, Strategies and Serendipities of Female Empowerment: From Cixi to Jiang Qing, from Imperial Power to Individual Resistance.*

**Abstract.** This panel explores how women from the Late Qing to the PRC asserted agency within gendered power structures—through secrecy, self-fashioning, and inventive resistance—to shape their visibility and authority in political and public life. The first paper examines the governance style of Empress Dowager Cixi, revealing how a

political primer, court protocol and her strategic public appearance enabled her to manoeuvre within a male-dominated imperial system and how she crafted her own forms of political legitimacy. Turning to a popular voice of resistance, the second paper analyses how Liang Baibo, one of the earliest female cartoonists in Republican China was using "fumerist laughter" as a tactic of empowerment. Through satirical images that attacked patriarchal hypocrisy, Liang transformed humour into a subtle yet forceful mode of defence, offence, and self-assertion. The third paper traces how Jiang Qing's medicalized body—especially hysteria—was used in political and media narratives. Contextualising her uterine illness within the broader history of political psychiatry in China, it highlights how secrecy, stigma, and misogyny shaped the fates of women in high politics. Responding to this the final paper situates Jiang Qing's trajectory in a transnational context, comparing it to Eva Perón and Elena Ceaușescu, both known for their public performance of politics. It explores how she navigated and performed these different role models — from revolutionary rebel to political spouse and "mother" of the nation. Together, the papers reveal the covert strategies and inventive tactics through which these women have exercised—or been denied—political agency.

**Keywords:** Female Political Actors, Imperial power, Cixi, Jiang Qing, Liang Baibo, Performative politics, Medicalization and Hysteria, Humour

**Natascha Gentz (The University of Edinburgh, UK)** – *"Mothers or Monsters" of the Nation: Female Performative Politics Across Political Regimes*

Stereotypes surrounding female leadership, in China or globally have been extensively documented in scholarship: women in power are portrayed as driven by a lust for authority, sexual ambition, or ruthless rivalry. More importantly they are cast as overly emotional or "hysterical" when advocating political causes deemed too extreme or radical. Jiang Qing has been no exception to such portrayals. Her life has inspired numerous biographies, novels, and plays, and even scholarly assessments tend to reproduce these agendas, ultimately passing a judgemental verdict. This paper situates Jiang Qing's personal life and political performances within a transnational comparison with two other prominent female leaders who operated in broadly comparable historical and political contexts, Eva Perón and Elena Ceaușescu, both known for their performative politics. Striking parallels in their biographies – ranging from aspects of childhood, ascendancy to power and their significant political engagements in the arts – also include comparable medical conditions, like the diagnoses and treatments of "hysteria". Bringing these three figures into conversation offers a new perspective on how Jiang Qing navigated her challenges posed by such female role models in shaping and performing her own trajectory: a celebrity and revolutionary rebel in Shanghai, a powerful leader during the Cultural Revolution. But also—less well known— a constrained wife in Yan'an, a physically vulnerable patient in Russia, and an attempted feminine "mother of the nation." The transnational comparison highlights how strategies of concealment, coded performance, and tightly managed public images shaped or limited the possibilities of female power across different regimes.

**Di Zhang (University of Edinburgh, UK)** – *Fumerist Laughter: Female Offence, Defence and Empowerment in Liang Baibo's (1911–1976) Cartoons*

Liang Baibo (梁白波) is recognized as one of the earliest female cartoonists in Republican China. Yet, reactions to her brief but prolific career in the 1930s ranged from praise to media reports that sensationalized her private life: mainstream magazines and tabloids fixated on her romantic entanglement with the famous cartoonist Ye Qianyu, mocking her sociability and sexual autonomy. While existing scholarship on Liang remains limited and primarily situated her within the domain of art history, this paper shifts the focus to her tactical deployment of fumerist laughter, examining how she weaponized her cartoons to resist the stigmatization and scandals surrounding her and to articulate both her feminist and political views. The notion of "fumerism," developed by feminists such as Regina Barreca, foregrounds the subversive power of women's laughter in both celebrating female difference and articulating feminist anger. Through this lens, the paper investigates two strands of Liang's work: the urban "Miss Bee" series (1935-1936) which features a modern girl who ridicules patriarchal hypocrisy and enacts everyday micro-rebellions; and wartime propaganda cartoons (1937-1938) that explore the intersection of national resistance and gendered responsibility. This essay examines how Liang's work brings feminist humour into dialogue with both patriotic discourse and urban modernity. It argues that her fumerist cartoons translate women's issues into comic, affectively legible, and socially shareable narratives. Through playing with recurring gendered icons and symbols, Liang satirically bites back at the male gaze, destabilizes normative gender and class hierarchies, and sketches alternative imaginaries of female subjectivity.

**Shu Yang (Western Michigan University, USA)** – *Unruly Uterus: Jiang Qing, Hysteria, and Women in Politics*

This paper examines the intertwining of the troubling history of hysteria in modern China and the personal history

of Jiang Qing, the wife and widow of Mao Zedong. Adopting a medico-political perspective, it sheds light on the threads that shaped her uterine affliction, her desire, power, and image in the media.
A long-standing practice, political psychiatry in China has determined the destinies of various historical figures and remains in momentum. Mao's private doctor Li Zhisui diagnosed Jiang Qing's hysteria and Lin Biao's neuroses, lending legitimacy to the media hysteria during the Cultural Revolution in painting the class enemies as psychopaths. Compared to political misogyny, what is nevertheless lesser known is that Jiang Qing was indeed a hysteric, in the original meaning of the term "hysteria," as a woman with a diseased uterus. Her mysterious uterine cancer and the surgery in the Soviet Union in the 1950s constituted the focal point, weaving up discourses of sickness, sexuality, and sin in the Chinese press, scandalizing a woman in high politics.
The paper begins by mapping out the translative trajectory of hysteria as a neologism into the modern Chinese lexicon. It goes on to trace the tenacious hold of the uterine theory in the epistemology of hysteria upon modern Chinese medical and political treatment of women. Coincidentally, or intentionally, the media also reported on the uterine operation that Song Qingling, the widow of Sun Yat-sen and another "mother of the nation," went through in the 1930s, but in an admiring tone.

[537] Shu-Kai Liu (City University of Hong Kong). *From Intra-lineage adoption (guoji) to Surrogacy: Lineage Continuation and Institutional Change in Chinese History.*

**Abstract.** In Chinese history, the absence of legitimate heirs within marriage constituted a core institutional risk in the patrilineal succession system. To address this, various lineage continuation mechanisms have emerged, including intra-lineage adoption (guoji), wife leasing (dianqi), concubinage, statutory adoption, and, in modern times, assisted reproductive technologies (ART) and surrogacy. This paper adopts a law-and-economics approach based on institutional cost analysis to examine their historical evolution.
The choice of lineage continuation mechanisms was shaped by three institutional cost dimensions: (1) heir definition costs—how to establish legitimate successor identity; (2) kinship verification costs—through clan rituals, household registration, or DNA testing; and (3) enforcement and exclusivity costs—how to assert and protect succession claims against competitors. As these costs shifted, lineage continuation mechanisms evolved along three major trends: a shift in responsibility from clan-based collective arrangements to family- and individual-based obligations embedded in state governance; an expansion of available mechanisms driven by changes in family structure and technological capacity; and a transformation of legitimacy standards from clan-based ritual consensus to formal statutory recognition. State recognition, adjustment, or prohibition of specific mechanisms reflected assessments of institutional controllability, incentive alignment, and governance risk. This cost-centered perspective situates the evolution of Chinese succession institutions within a longer arc of structural transformation and offers historical and normative insight for understanding contemporary inheritance and family institution reform.
**Keywords:** Lineage Continuation, Institutional Change, Succession Law, Law and Economics, Chinese Legal History

[539] Samira Müller (Heidelberg University), Chiara Bocci (Ludwig Maximilian University Munich), David Pattinson (University of Leeds), Flavia Xi Fang (University of London), Anna Lisa Beck (University of Zurich) and Zian Chen (University of Zurich). *From Lofty Mountains to the Deep Sea – Premodern Animal Studies.*

**Abstract.** This double panel offers perspectives from Animal Studies to understand intricate cultural, economic, and intellectual developments in Chinese history. Centring the experiences of animals and their perception as seen through literary, linguistic, archaeological, and art historical evidence allows us to reassess and broaden our conception of premodern life and thought.
Our contribution is structured according to the traditional geographic description of animals: those roaming mountain forests and feasting on lush meadows on the one, and those plunging into waterways or lurking in the unknown depths on the other. The first panel addresses animals inhabiting the land. Samira Müller examines the role of sheep and goats in Early China based on their terminology. Moving south, Chiara Bocci investigates the impact of rhinoceros as seen in literary and archaeological sources. Moving to smaller members of the animal kingdom, David Pattinson discusses Chinese knowledge about bees and wasps.
The second panel – dedicated to animals inhabiting watery environments – focusses on stranger and more unknown creatures and their role in shaping Chinese worldviews. Flavia Xi Fang investigates how new perspectives regarding coastal fauna shaped during the Tang period. Entering ever more remote realms, Anna Lisa Beck traces the historical understanding of sharks through linguistic and philological analysis. Finally, Zian Chen addresses early Qing period reassessments of maritime creatures as seen through pictorial representation.

**Keywords:** animal studies, interdisciplinary studies, human-animal interrelation, domestication, worldviews, environmental studies, cultural history, history of thought

**Samira Müller (Heidelberg University)** – *Undercover agents in Sheep's Clothing: A Sociolinguistic study on the cultural impacts of ovines and caprae in Early China*

The animals generically called yang 羊 in early Chinese texts served as food sources but also provided secondary products. Moreover, they substantially defined the emerging ritual and sacrificial culture from at least the second millennium BCE onward, which came to form the very core of "Chinese" identity. This study sets out to explore the cultural, economic, and social influences of sheep (ovines) and goats (caprae) through a study of Chinese terminology connected to the animals themselves and the practices involved in their husbandry. The analysis consists of two parts: Early Chinese terminology concerning the animals in question is first reassessed in the light of recent zooarchaeological findings on the development of sheep/goat breeding around the North China Plain. In a second step, the terminology will be analysed with regard to possible underlying subsistence strategies. Since the way of life of speaker communities in question (sedentary, agro-pastoral, or fully transhumant) alter both the role of domestic animals and how they are perceived by humans, a comparative analysis of sheep/goat related terminology in Mongolian, a language predominantly spoken by pastoralists, will be employed to better understand how and to which degree sheep/goats contributed to the formation of Early Chinese life and thought.

**Chiara Bocci (Ludwig Maximilian University Munich)** – *The Rhinoceros – a Precious, Multi-purpose Animal of Ancient China: Beliefs, Catching Methods, and the Production of Luxury Goods*

Big animals similar to buffalos, single or double-horned, make their appearance in the earliest sources of Chinese tradition. While scholars still debate over the identity of the quadruped called si 兕, all agree in identifying xi 犀 with the rhinoceros. Different graphic variants of these characters can be found on bronzes and oracle bone inscriptions, and rhinoceros are mentioned in early geographical-mythological works, such as the Shanhai jing 山海經 ("Book of Mountains and Seas", ca. 4th–1st cent. BC). These pachyderms have inspired ancient artists as well: archaeologists unearthed a rhino-shaped vessel, from as early as the 11th cent. BC, with exceptionally realistic features. This and other observations led scholars to believe that rhinoceros originally inhabited a vast area of today's China, well beyond the jungles of the south. This contribution traces beliefs and practices regarding rhinoceros in literary and archaeological sources from the earliest occasional mentions to the ubiquitous appearance of the animal in gift lists to the imperial court during the Tang period. Throughout the dynastic histories, rhinoceros are hunted, sent to the capital alive as tributes, and finally used to manufacture luxurious products. It was their horn, in particular, which attracted people's attention: besides supposed supernatural, apotropaic properties, it had a similar use as ivory from elephant tusks. The horn was in fact a prized material to manufacture all sorts of fine items, such as hairpins, belts, and drinking cups. The thick, almost impenetrable skin of rhinoceros provided, moreover, sturdy material for armour.

**David Pattinson (University of Leeds)** – *How Did the Chinese Know What They Knew About Bees?*

The total amount of original writing specifically about bees and wasps, or feng 蜂 as they were called together, in the Chinese textual tradition is relatively small, and the pictorial record tiny. However, bees and wasps were present in everyday life, and their products were much sought after for medicine, food, illumination and other uses. Increasingly, the educated gentry wrote about them, or at least the texts in which feng are the subject of more than passing attention survive in greater numbers from the Song period onwards. While it is well known that Chinese writers generally preferred to write about the natural world, and human interaction with it, from the comfort of their book-lined studies, feng and especially honeybees provide a particularly interesting case of human-insect interaction for similar reasons that they have fascinated humans over the centuries in other parts of the world. While there is some modern scholarship on the representation of bees in writing, and some on beekeeping, the question of how those who wrote about feng knew what they knew has not been addressed in any systematic way. How much was received knowledge, oral tradition, or personal observation respectively? How personally invested in this knowledge were they? While it often isn't clear exactly how those writing on feng gained their knowledge, this contribution explores what transmitted literature suggest. Furthermore, it examines how different writers added to, or disputed, existing knowledge about feng.

**Flavia Xi Fang (University of London)** – *Tastes of the Tide: Seafood, Sensory Experience, and Coastal Knowledge in Tang China*

When Yuan Zhen assumed his post as Prefect of Yuezhou along China's southeastern coast in 823, one of his first actions was to submit a memorial calling for the abolishment of seafood tribute from Mingzhou, especially mussels and ark clams. Beyond the conventional concern over burdensome obligations on local populations, he also cited

the sensory and medical inadequacies of these foods as part of his objection. This paper takes Yuan's remarks as a point of departure to rethink seafood culture in Tang China. Drawing on official records, poetry, travel accounts, and medical treatises, I argue that the late seventh to ninth centuries witnessed a significant shift in how marine products were perceived and valued. This shift, however, is evident less in seafood as a general category than in the geographic origins of specific products. Tang literati's engagement with the taste and knowledge of what the sea offered constitutes an important, and hitherto overlooked, pre-history to the better-known rise of seafood's prestige in the Song and later periods. By focusing on sensory and embodied experience, the article also shows how Tang literati were learning to live with and interpret the coast in new ways, reshaping how we understand the period's relationship with the sea.

**Anna Lisa Beck (University of Zurich)** – *Fishing in the Dark: Terminological Considerations on Sharks and Shark Products in Premodern China*

Historically, sharks and other creatures of the maritime world have been far removed from continental human life, submerged in the endless depths of the ocean. Whether they were circulated as goods from far-away lands or woven into narratives of sea-borne heroism and tragedy, their role in premodern China has yet to be traced. In this endeavour, shark and shark-product terminologies remain a central challenge. Tied to specific cultures, languages, and periods, they are especially difficult to trace across diachronic and diatopic dimensions. While previous research by Hong Wei (2014) and Ou Jia (2020) has provided valuable insight into premodern Chinese conceptions of sha 鯊 and jiao 鮫 respectively, this talk will further illuminate the otherwise murky terms allegedly referring to sharks by triangulating additional information on marine creatures and terminologies in imperial China. From a linguistic perspective, this talk reconstructs the ancient Chinese pronunciations of the relevant terms to trace homophonies and dialect pronunciations. The reconstructions are then juxtaposed with relevant terminologies from Austronesian languages to explore potential etymologies, investigating whether they are areal or wandering words. To verify the linguistic and philological considerations of this study, I review representative palaeozoological traces of sharks, sha, and jiao. In doing so, I introduce a material perspective to my otherwise theoretical findings, linking shark products to specific localities in early Chinese imperial history. With its triangulating methodology, this talk adds depth to persisting discourse on shark terminologies in Chinese Studies, and serves as a valuable example for interdisciplinary approaches in maritime history.

**Zian Chen (University of Zurich)** – *Illustration of Marine Creatures in Haicuo tu 海错图 ("Pictures of the Various Marine Creatures") and Its Global Context*

In the preface to Haicuo tu 海错图 (1698), the author Nie Huang 聂璜 (fl. late 17th to early 18th century) claims that there had never been a pictorial schema of marine creatures in Chinese history. According to his assertion, earlier accounts that faithfully described marine life lacked illustrations, while those that did include images depicted supernatural marine creatures. Nie's statement is not merely an emphasis on the importance of his work; it could also be an urgent response to the ideological crisis facing Confucianism at the early Qing period. As the sinocentric worldview which had been promised by the Confucian classics were challenged by the Manchu reign as well as European publications, literati began to question whether the myriad creatures mentioned in the canonical texts truly existed and, more importantly, the authority of the canon itself. This sense of crisis is likewise reflected in the structure of Haicuo tu. On the other hand, Haicuo tu does not entirely exclude what Nie Huang refers to as "the supernatural beings of the sea." In addition to traditional Confucian sources, images of these supernatural creatures also drew on other origins, e.g., folklores in European writings. This contribution will demonstrate how these European visual prototypes entered what Nie calls China's "first" illustrated compendium of marine creatures, how they reveal interactions among Confucian literati, missionaries and imagery of animals in European publications during this historical moment, and how the concept of marine creatures proved to be fluid throughout this process.

[541] Linquan Ma (King's College London, University of Hong Kong). *Contested Conferences: Global knowledge exchanges and medical internationalism in Cold War China.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines how the PRC transformed international medical conferences into hybrid spaces in which political performance and knowledge production became inseparable during the global Cold War. Before 1949, Chinese medical experts sought to secure participation in international conferences to build scholarly authority and contribute to academic debates. After the founding of the PRC, however, geopolitical realignment and Cold War diplomacy profoundly shaped the forms and meanings of such participation.

This study analyses a series of international medical conferences China hosted or joined from the 1950s to the 1960s. Drawing on archival materials, memoirs, re-analysed news coverage, and assessments by international

observers, it reconstructs the role of Chinese medical experts as participants. By revisiting the so-called "World Health Congress," widely publicised in 1950s China as a prestigious global event, the paper demonstrates how deeply politics intervened in medical internationalism. Far from being scientific forums, these congresses were marginal, Soviet-aligned, quasi-medical platforms where Chinese delegates served as representatives of a socialist nation. Yet, political dominance did not extinguish substantive exchange. The paper highlights the 1964 Beijing World Science Conference, where Chinese medical experts shared research, especially malaria-control findings, with representatives from Asian, African, and Latin American countries. These materials were actively translated and circulated. Examining these cases, the paper argues that medical knowledge in early PRC internationalism emerged not as a purely technical domain nor as a fully politicised performance, but as a hybrid practice in which older Republican-era modes of transnational knowledge production persisted in altered form.
**Keywords:** Medical internationalism, Cold War China, Scientific diplomacy, Knowledge-making

[543] Lu Zhang (independent researcher), Yifei Luo (Shanghai Normal University) and Wanlin Mia Lu (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London). *Negotiating Transcultural Identities through Chinese Foodways in Europe: Circulation, Memory, and Cultural Exchange.*
**Abstract.** Recent studies show that food provides a powerful lens for examining the entanglement of global structures and everyday life. Shaped by political histories, economic forces, material circulations, and human mobility—yet enacted through intimate habits and sensory experience—food mediates between the macro and the micro. This double-panel session traces the transcultural trajectories of Chinese food in Europe, illustrating how culinary objects, spaces, and practices illuminate negotiations of identity, mobility, and cultural exchange.
Opening with historical encounters, Luo situate this timeline in the early modern era, examining how Chinese porcelain—as an exported form of material culture—transformed European consumption by enabling new ways of drinking tea and consuming other imported foods, while reshaping domestic etiquette and sociability. Moving to the early twentieth century, Zhang explore the food experiences of Chinese intellectuals in London, where dining spaces emerged as expressive sites in which nostalgia, affect, and intercultural negotiation converged, laying the foundations for Chinese culinary presence in Europe.
Turning to contemporary contexts, Zhang examine the strategies through which Chinese restaurateurs in Finland draw on Western imaginaries of "Asia" to make their food locally acceptable. Lu's ethnographic research on London-based Chinese professionals highlights the role of transnational taste-making and digitally mediated food practices in shaping emerging migrant foodways. Drawing on the author's entrepreneurial experience in Mannheim, the final contribution, Zhou's paper investigates the negotiation of consumer perceptions, authenticity, and intercultural communication in practice.
Bringing together interdisciplinary scholarship and practitioner perspectives, this session demonstrates how Chinese food continues to influence—and be influenced by—Europe's evolving cultural landscapes, revealing transcultural identities through the circulations, memories, and everyday negotiations embedded in eating and drinking.
**Keywords:** Chinese Diaspora in Europe, Culinary Identity and Memory, Material Culture and Mobility, Global Circulation of Chinese Food, Transcultural studies

**Luo Yifei (Shanghai Normal University)** – *A Feast of Forms: Chinese Porcelain and the Transformation of Hot-Drink Customs and Domestic Etiquette in Seventeenth-Century Europe*
Drawing on methodologies from material culture studies and global exchange history, and using trade records, household inventories, European still-life paintings, literary descriptions, and family diaries, this study demonstrates the pivotal role of Chinese porcelain in reshaping European domestic life from the seventeenth century onward, arguing that the arrival of Chinese porcelain triggered a profound "revolution of vessels and manners". Before this period, European households relied primarily on metalware, earthenware, wood, and glass. The maritime routes opened during the Age of Exploration enabled the large-scale importation of Chinese porcelain, whose material qualities—density, whiteness, heat resistance, and insulation—directly fostered new practices surrounding hot beverages such as tea, coffee, and chocolate. More than simple dietary habits, these beverages became emblems of refined and fashionable lifestyles.
Porcelain facilitated a shift from shared drinking vessels to individualized utensils, giving rise to new drinking sets and associated social etiquette. It also helped to generate new sociability paradigms, including the English afternoon tea, which produced novel behavioral norms, conversational forms, and social rules that would shape salon and club cultures in modern Europe. Moreover, the porcelain cabinet became a central marker of domestic

taste and wealth, stimulating the vogue for chinoiserie, influencing Rococo aesthetics, and reshaping European sensibilities. Far beyond a mere exotic commodity, Chinese porcelain catalyzed a comprehensive transformation of European modern lifestyles, laying both the material and aesthetic foundations for new domestic practices, social behaviors, and standards of refinement.

**Lu Zhang (Independent Researcher)** – *From ABC Tea Room to Shundong Lou (順東樓): Food Memory of Chinese Diasporic Intellectuals in 1930s and Wartime London*

This paper uses food memory to explore the cultural, emotional, and spatial experiences of Chinese intellectuals in 1930s–1940s London. Drawing on the writings and artworks of Zhu Ziqing (朱自清), Chiang Yee (蔣彝), Xia Nai (夏鼐), and Xu Zhimo (徐志摩), it examines how Chinese restaurants functioned as expressive public spaces where nostalgia, imagination, and social interaction converged. Against the backdrop of interwar cosmopolitanism and wartime tension, these spaces provided familiarity and belonging, while encounters with British cuisine highlighted the sensory and symbolic distance of the host culture. The study incorporates the yet understudied travelogue of Fu Zhenlun (傅振倫), a staff member of the Beiping National Palace Museum sent to work at the 1935–36 London International Exhibition of Chinese Art. Fu's account complements and corroborates other London-based intellectuals' writings, offering an insider–outsider perspective on their everyday experiences. The paper situates these practices within the concept of "everyday life," understood as the historically specific lived experiences of individuals in modern, rapidly changing urban environments shaped by industrial capitalism and metropolitan routines, while also reflecting distinctly Chinese cultural sensibilities. Through quotidian practices such as dining, gathering, and circulating, Chinese intellectuals negotiated social networks, cultural expression, and belonging. It argues that Chinese restaurants were dynamic sites of cultural memory, social networking, and subtle political expression—spaces where homesickness met imagination, nostalgia intertwined with exile, and diasporic presence was actively asserted in London's multicultural milieu.

**Wanlin Mia Lu (SOAS)** – *Mobile People, Mobile Food: Everyday Eating among the Chinese Middle-Class in London*

Since China's economic reforms, the rise of the middle class and accelerated transnational mobility have made the everyday lives of overseas professionals a crucial lens for understanding social transformation. This study focuses on young, middle-class Chinese migrants in London, examining how they enact a transnational mode of eating under the intertwined influences of migration, post-reform social change, and digital technology. It explores how these food practices reflect the shaping of taste, the formation of social networks, and their sustained ties to China. The study is based on one year of ethnographic fieldwork combined with autoethnographic reflection and centers on urban Chinese professionals aged 28–45 with higher education and cross-border experience.

This research yields five key insights into the food practices of young Chinese migrants. First, rather than "ethnicity," a cultivated omnivorous appetite shaped by mobility better captures their cultural identity. Second, their practices differ markedly from earlier generations of Chinese migrants and align more closely with global middle-class lifestyles. Third, digital technologies play a transformative role in mediating transnational food experiences. Fourth, keeping up with food trends in China is vital for sustaining ties and a sense of belonging. Fifth, commensality remains central to their social networks.

[545] Giulia Pra Floriani (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), Freda Fiala (University of Arts Linz), Ornella De Nigris (University of Siena) and Jenny Lin (University of Southern California). *Exhibiting China in Europe: Encounters, Collections, and the Making of Display Narratives (19th century-present).*

**Abstract.** This panel examines how China has been represented and interpreted in exhibitions and collections abroad, from the nineteenth century to the present, with a particular focus on narrative construction. It integrates historical, curatorial, and contemporary perspectives to explore how exhibitions and cultural institutions actively shape stories about China, and how these narratives are mediated by political, cultural, and institutional contexts, as well as the positionality of curators—whether Chinese or Western. The panel draws on theoretical frameworks from museum studies, postcolonial theory, visual culture, and sensory studies, investigating how objects, artworks, and images function as narrative devices. Concepts such as curatorial voice, cultural translation, and historiographical framing are used to explore how exhibitions construct, negotiate, or even contest dominant narratives about China. By approaching exhibitions as sites of both representation and interpretation, the panel considers how historical knowledge, curatorial choices, and contemporary global discourses intersect to produce complex images of China. Contributions will span diverse case studies—from archaeological and historical objects to modern and contemporary art—highlighting the multiple temporalities and cultural perspectives involved in exhibitionary practice. Overall, the panel foregrounds theoretical and methodological approaches to understanding narrative formation in museum and exhibition contexts, offering insights into how China's image is constructed,

circulated, and reimagined internationally. It demonstrates the ongoing interplay between history, curation, and perception, emphasizing the critical role of exhibitions in shaping cross-cultural understandings of China.
**Keywords:** Museums and Exhibitions, Narrative construction, Curatorial practice, Cultural translation, Perception, Representation, Cross-cultural interpretation, Chinese art in Europe, Chinese collections in Europe

**Freda Fiala (University of Arts Linz)** – *Atmospheres of Neutrality? Exhibitions and Sino-Austrian Cultural Politics during the Cold War, by Freda Fiala*
This paper examines how exhibitions shaped the cultural representation of the People's Republic of China in Austria during the Cold War, tracing how "China" was narrated, visualised, spatialised and sensorially staged in Austrian museum spaces from the 1950s to the late 1980s. Rather than presuming a coherent cultural-diplomatic agenda, it approaches these exhibitions as sites where curatorial practice, institutional conditions, diplomatic caution and changing political circumstances overlapped. Building on scholarship that characterises Austria as a "bridge" between East and West and highlights neutrality as an enabling condition for selective scientific and cultural exchange, the paper situates exhibition-making within the broader context of Austria's slow rapprochement with the PRC – marked by delayed recognition, geopolitical caution and intermittently facilitated cultural contacts. Drawing on a series of exhibitions – including Querschnitt durch China (Museum für Völkerkunde, 1958), China (Schloss Matzen, 1967), Archäologische Funde der Volksrepublik China (MAK, 1974), and Chinas sensationeller Fund: Qin Shi Huang Di (Museum für Völkerkunde, 1985) – the paper analyses how each of these negotiated competing imaginaries of "China" under conditions of ideological scrutiny. Attending to the sensory and spatial politics of display, it asks how museum exhibitions organised not only knowledge but also proximity, atmosphere, and embodied spectatorship. The paper argues that Cold War exhibitionary practice in Austria formed a distinctive diplomatic sensorium: a space in which political hesitation, cultural curiosity and negotiation converged.
**Giulia Pra Floriani (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)** – *Curating Giacomo Caneva's Photographs Exhibition: Nineteenth-Century China-Europe Relations beyond Humiliation*
This paper presents the curatorial strategies adopted to structure the exhibition "Reframing Silk: Giacomo Caneva's Photographs of the 1859 Expedition to China" (Museum of Oriental Art, Venice, February-April 2026). Giacomo Caneva (1813–1865) was one of the first professional photographers to travel to East Asia. Possessing a deep knowledge of photographic techniques, he was well-known among European artists and tourists who visited the city for his images of Roman monuments, landscapes, and genre scenes. In 1859, he traveled to Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Huzhou via Calcutta as a member of the Castellani-Freschi Expedition, whose aim was to collect healthy silkworms to mitigate the effects of pébrine, a silkworm disease that had damaged silk production in Europe (Zanier 1993). The exhibition showcases thirty-two of Caneva's original photographs of the expedition, an impressive number considering that some forty prints are known to exist. Based on a critical reading of the prints, corroborated by historical reconstruction of the circumstances in which they were realized, the exhibition frames the photographs as diplomatic, commercial, and scientific objects, setting them apart from some of the best-known nineteenth-century European images of Asia, which often reproduce a colonizing gaze that denigrates their subjects. Caneva's images represent a more intimate level of collaboration between local Chinese agents and foreign visitors, grounded in exchanges between Chinese officials and foreign merchants, and thus enable present-day readers to re-imagine China's nineteenth century beyond humiliation.
**Ornella De Nigris (University of Siena)** – *Revisiting Pan Yuliang's Works in Italy: A Transcultural Trajectory and Its Contemporary Revival*
This paper investigates the exhibition history of Pan Yuliang's works in Italy during her formative years in the 1920s and examines how her inclusion in the 2024 Venice Biennale has renewed attention to her historical ties with the Italian art world. Based on a preliminary and still partial archival reconstruction, the study draws on documents attesting to her scholarship-supported training at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Rome, her work in painting and sculpture, and her participation in the Academy's annual student exhibitions, where she received a gold medal in 1926. Although surviving evidence of her Italian exhibitions remains limited, biographical sources and institutional records confirm her active presence in Roman artistic circles and the recognition she achieved there. Building on this initial reconstruction, I will carry on systematic consultation of Italian art libraries, the archives of the Accademia di Belle Arti, catalogues of historical exhibitions, auction records, and early twentieth-century art journals. Through these sources, the project aims to identify the works by Pan that circulated in Italy and to reconstruct, where possible, the curatorial discourses that framed her early reception. The hope is that further documentation will clarify how her practice was understood within the Italian context and the extent to which transcultural elements of her modernism were acknowledged. Her renewed presence at the 2024 Venice Biennale

raises further questions about the factors behind this belated re-emergence. By combining ongoing archival research with contemporary curatorial analysis, the paper proposes preliminary hypotheses to reposition Pan Yuliang within broader narratives of transcultural modernism.

**Jenny Lin (University of Southern California)** – *Going Global in Venice: Developments in the Exhibition of Contemporary Chinese Art*

This paper examines curatorial efforts aimed at promoting contemporary Chinese art, particularly within Italy and at the Venice Art Biennial over the past three decades, from 1993 to the present. Analyses reveal transitions from the glaring exclusion of Chinese art to arguably token inclusions and nation-based displays to fuller intercultural integrations. I discuss examples from curator Achille Bonito Oliva's earliest exhibition of Chinese artists at the Venice Biennial in "Passaggio a Oriente / Passage to the Orient" (1993) to "Stranieri Ovunque / Foreigners Everywhere," the group exhibition of the 2024 Venice Biennial. “Foreigners Everywhere,” along with collateral events in 2024 (echoed in 2026 as seen in Los Angeles County Museum of Art’s exhibition of artist Su Xiaobai) featured several Chinese artists from around the world and foregrounded contemporary artists’ integration of traditional forms. Additional revelatory case studies from the Venice Biennial include curator Harald Szeemann’s “dAPERTutto / APERTO over ALL” (1999) and the exhibition’s display of artist Cai Guo-Qiang's controversial "Venice's Rent Collection Courtyard," which won the Venice Biennial’s top award; Chinese-born, European-based curator Hou Hanru's "Zone of Urgency" (2003) exhibition section, conceived of as a critical contemplation of globalization; Chinese artists' contested inclusion in the Kenyan Pavilion (2013, 2015); and “Continuum – Generation by Generation,” the 2017 exhibition of the PRC’s Pavilion of the Venice Biennial, critiqued for its conservatism. The paper finally looks beyond Venice to consider how a new generation of Chinese artists living and working in Italy grapple with their diasporic positionalities and cross-cultural relations within more localized contexts.

[546] Christopher Yang (Stanford University). *Essence 精, Spirit 神, and the Polemics of Self-Cultivation in Early China.*

**Abstract.** Ideas and practices freshly visible in excavated technical corpora have transformed our understanding of self-cultivation in early China (e.g., Mark Csikszentmihalyi’s re-reading of early Confucian discourse in view of contemporary physiognomy in Material Virtue). This paper turns to “essence” 精 and “spirit” 神: like the Greek pneuma and psyche, these were keywords for the self that were commonly enlisted in early discussions of human nature and possibilities, in medical texts and “Masters” 諸子 texts alike. I focus in particular on voices in the Zhuangzi 莊子 and Huainanzi 淮南子, Western Han texts that call for the nourishing of essence and spirit as part of programs of self-cultivation. I demonstrate that the practical idiom and rhetorical self-presentation of these authors betray their proximity to—and a desire to distinguish themselves from—that class of physicians whose hygienic arts appear in contemporary medical manuscripts like the Shiwen 十問 and Tianxia zhidao tan 天下至道談 from Mawangdui 馬王堆. I discuss how tracking essence and spirit across the bibliographical and disciplinary boundaries by which we frequently carve up our scholarly labors sheds light on the relationship between the authors of these Masters texts and their contemporaries and enriches our picture of early self-cultivation and its connections to later religious and medical cultures.

**Keywords:** Early China, Self-Cultivation, Religion and Medicine, Intellectual History

[553] Yujiao Xing (University of Oxford). *Unequal Returns: New Farmers, Class Stratification, and Rural Revitalization in China.*

**Abstract.** Since the launch of the Rural Revitalization strategy, Chinese state discourses have promoted the figure of the “new farmer” as a youthful, entrepreneurial subject capable of modernizing agriculture and “saving” the countryside. Policy documents celebrate return migrants who become “rural talents”, suggesting that return offers new opportunities for upward mobility. Drawing on 28 in-depth interviews conducted between 2020 and 2023 with new-generation rural returnees working in agriculture, this paper examines how the “new farmer” identity is constructed and how it stratifies returnees internally.

I argue that “new farmer” is a state-produced subject category that seeks to remove the low-class, low-quality stigma attached to “farmers”, but in practice generates highly unequal “returns”. State policies, local governments, social organizations and media concentrate discursive and material support on a small group of capitalized returnees who become model “leaders”, running demonstration farms and coordinating production. By contrast, low-capital returnees struggle to inhabit the same label: for them, returning to agriculture often means a return to the peasant class, and land becomes their last fallback option. For them, the “new farmer” identity functions more

as a moral resource than as a secure livelihood trajectory.
The paper contributes to critical agrarian studies by conceptualizing the “new farmer” as a technology of subject-making in China’s agrarian transformation, shifting attention from celebrated elites to low-capital returnees, and showing how rural revitalization governs through identity in ways that reproduce class stratification among returnees.
**Keywords:** Return migration, Rural revitalization, New farmer identity, Class stratification, Agrarian transformation (China)

[554] Jiefang Yang (Tsinghua University), Zifei Gao (Tsinghua University), Xuehui Wan (Tsinghua University) and Yuhang Lu (Tsinghua University). *State Governance and Local Voices: Discourse, Disputes, and Power Contestation in Late Imperial China.*
**Abstract.** Abstract :This panel explores the distribution of power, resources, and discursive authority in late imperial China from the 18th to the early 20th century—a period of profound institutional transformation. Through case studies examining legal reform, land rights, industrial operation, and fiscal relations, we investigate the dynamic contestation and negotiation between central and local actors.
Jiefang Yang demonstrates how the Qing state in the 18th century "gendered" suicide statutes through accumulating legal precedents, creating standardized official narratives in judicial records that prioritized chastity discourse. Zifei Gao analyzes land rights verification around Nansi Lake, showing how the imperative of maintaining the Grand Canal empowered the central state to dominate local property disputes. By the 19th century, local voices gained prominence. Yuhang Lu reveals how provincial authorities and local interests formed implicit resistance against central power during overseas Chinese merchants' mining ventures in North China. Finally, Xuehui Wan argues that fiscal relations between Zhili and Rehe epitomized central-local reconfiguration, culminating in Rehe's establishment as a separate province after the 1911 Revolution.
Collectively, these papers contend that late imperial governance was not merely top-down power imposition, but a complex process of negotiation, competition, and compromise between the state and local societies within specific discursive frameworks.
**Keywords:** Qing Dynasty, State Governance, Local Power, Power Discourse, Central-Local Reconfiguration

**Jiefang Yang 杨洁钫 (Tsinghua University)** – *Speaking for Whom: Female Suicide and Judicial Trials in 18th-Century China*
Out of respect for human life and a serious stance on suicide, the Ming Dynasty introduced numerous legal provisions concerning suicidal acts into its statutes, most notably the article on "causing death through coercion." These provisions were subsequently inherited by the Qing Dynasty's "Great Qing Legal Code." However, through legislative practices such as "using precedents to override statutes" and the incorporation of strict moral concepts, the Qing Dynasty continuously altered the content and essence of the article on coercion. By the mid-Qing period, the provision on "causing suicide through coercion" had almost become a facet of laws addressing sexual crimes. Yet, this trend did not stem solely from the increasingly entrenched cult of chastity. Rather, the processes of legislation and adjudication collectively shaped a logic of suicide due to illicit relationships into an official discourse, constructing an image of women as hypersensitive to violations of their chastity. The true reasons behind women's decisions to commit suicide remain unknown, submerged beneath leading questions in archival records and formulaic confessions.
**Zifei Gao 高梓霏 (Tsinghua University)** – *The Land Boundary Disputes and Practices of Property Rights Verification in Nansi Lake Region during the Qing Dynasty*
During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Nansi Lake, situated between Jiangsu and Shandong, became part of the Grand Canal's hydraulic system. By the Qing era, frequent land boundary disputes arose due to the erosion of markers from Yellow River floods, increased land scarcity from canal reservoir encroachment, and complex social networks along administrative borders. These conflicts led to practices of verifying land property rights by both government and locals. Verification methods saw agrarian societal institutions and customs persist in the newly formed lake area, with geographical demarcation remaining the most common and effective approach. Additionally, as property rights were linked to taxation, household registration played a key role in verification. The state held absolute authority in Grand Canal matters, often overriding prefectural, county, and common interests. Within local society, multiple power groups were deeply entangled, increasing instability in the property rights order. Thus, historical context and property rights institutions interacted in the Qing Dynasty's Nansi Lake Region to form a distinct regional mechanism for the division and protection of property rights.

**Yuhang Lu 鲁宇航 (Tsinghua University)** – *Overseas Chinese Merchants and Mining Development in North China：A Case Study of Zhaoyuan Gold Mine (1885–1908)*

In the latter half of the 19th century, Chinese merchants in the San Francisco engaged in the grocery trade turned their attention to their homeland. Influenced by the California Gold Rush, they particularly targeting Zhaoyuan's gold mines. Initially operated under a public-private model, the Zhaoyuan Mining Bureau briefly thrived but soon faced funding shortages and mismanagement. Efforts to introduce Western technology failed, leading to stagnation. Mining rights were later monopolized, and Chinese merchants' interests were marginalized as operators turned to foreign investment. Although the Ministry of Commerce aimed to protect overseas Chinese capital, frequent administrative reforms weakened central oversight. Meanwhile, local Shandong authorities delayed actions and showed bias, causing Chinese capital to be sidelined and eventually forcing the mines into reliance on foreign funds.

**Xuehui Wan 万学慧 (Tsinghua University)** – *Integration and Separation of Fiscal Relations between Zhili and Rehe in the Late Qing and Early Republican Period*

The changes in the fiscal relationship between Zhili and Rehe from the late Qing to the early Republic of China were a microcosm and continuation of the broader transformation of central–local relations that had unfolded since the Taiping Rebellion. In the mid-Qing period, the court implemented a military-prefectural administrative system in Rehe. After Li Hongzhang assumed the post of Governor-General of Zhili, he sought to integrate the fiscal systems of Zhili and Rehe in order to expand the administrative powers of the Zhili governorship; in doing so, he effectively took over the Board of Revenue's responsibility for allocating and remitting funds to Rehe.Following Li's departure from office, his successors attempted to dismantle this fiscal integration between Zhili and Rehe. During the New Policies Reforms at the end of the Qing, proposals to establish Rehe as a separate province emerged repeatedly. The Qing court, however, rejected these proposals on the grounds that the fiscal relationship between Zhili and Rehe remained unclear, and continued to expect Zhili to shoulder financial responsibility for Rehe.After the establishment of the Republic, Xiong Xiling advanced plans for creating an independent administrative unit in Rehe by first clarifying the fiscal jurisdictions of Zhili and Rehe and placing Rehe's finances under direct central control. The adjustment of central–local fiscal relations in the late Qing and early Republican period was, at its core, an attempt to reconcile the allocation of financial authority with the distribution of administrative responsibilities.

[558] Yifei Cai (Peking University) and Feiyang Yue (Nanjing University). *Transboundary, Secularization and Remembrances: Poetic-Pictorial Production and Visual Culture in the Ming and Qing Dynasties.*

**Abstract.** In ancient China, poetry, calligraphy, and painting were celebrated as the "Three Excellences"三絕 of artistic accomplishment. Leveraging the intermediality of signs between text and image, they coalesced into unified, dynamic, and vital material documents that collectively symbolized the forms of classical civilization. The literary and artistic history of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1912) dynasties witnessed the emergence of a wide array of poetic-pictorial documents. This phenomenon not only responded to the needs and expressions of literati culture but also continually expanded the tension between orthodox and popular cultures amidst the process of secularization. This panel presents four distinct case studies on text-image, aiming to move beyond simplistic discussions of text-to-image translation at the methodological level. It focuses instead on exploring knowledge production and visual culture centered on these documents, situated within their corresponding contexts of cultural history. According to the analyses of the respective papers: 1) Specific political events of the early Tang dynasty (618-907) were continually remediated across different historical contexts, their cultural semantics transformed through pictorial depictions and adaptations in popular literature, thereby challenging the traditional "highbrow-lowbrow"雅俗 dichotomy and revealing fluid dynamics; 2) Famous mid-Tang poems, through the collaborative efforts of scholar communities and families in Ming dynasty, were visually reproduced, even functioning as collectibles or objects of circulation within cultural society, thus leaving later generations' engagement with Tang classics "mediated"; 3) Ming dynasty drama illustrations, by reconfiguring Buddhist narratives, served diverse social functions and bore witness to the integration of foreign religions with indigenous Chinese thought. Following the intervention of images, various textual genres transferred the "past" they carried into the "present" of cultural production. This process guides us to witness that contemporary's conscious expressions within the visual realm, thereby offering new interpretations of literati life, print culture and circulation, and intellectual exchange.

**Keywords:** Ming-Qing Culture, Poetic-Pictorial Documents, Secularity, Knowledge Production, Visual Culture

**Yifei Cai (Beijing University)** – *From Political Symbol to Cultural Capital: The Secular Evolution and Cultural Production of the "Eighteen Scholars Ascending Yingzhou" Incident*

The "Eighteen Scholars Ascending to Yingzhou"十八學士登瀛洲 is an iconic symbol from early Tang political history. Over a millennium, it evolved through cultural reconfiguration and semantic shifts into a multi-layered cultural motif, inspiring a rich array of pictorial representations. Its cultural significance extends beyond its original political-educational function to its reinterpretation across diverse historical contexts. Textually, it transformed from Emperor Taizong's 唐太宗 political symbol to a scholarly ideal for Song and Yuan literati, later popularized in Ming and Qing literary works. Visually, shifting historical contexts led to three distinct expressive patterns: "one figure per image"一人一像, "the four arts"琴棋書畫 and "mountain retreat gatherings"山林聚會. This evolution in semantics and iconography reveals the symbiosis between elite and popular culture in China. Adopting a dual perspective of social intellectual and material cultural history, this paper traces the "Eighteen Scholars" from a political symbol to cultural capital. By examining its expressive patterns from the Tang to Qing dynasties, the study uses multidimensional comparative analysis to reveal the fluidity between high and low culture and its underlying diverse cultural dimensions.

**Feiyang Yue (Nanjing University)** – *The Gazed-Upon Painting: Reconstructing the Cultural Production of 'Song of the Pipa' Poetic Paintings*

"Song of the Pipa"琵琶行, the renowned poem of Bai Juyi 白居易(772-846), sketches the figures of two "fallen souls": the Assistant Perfect of Jiangzhou 江州司馬 and the Pipa female player. Based on the tradition of gender writing, the obscured female created by male authors was included in both poem and relevant paintings, thus making the literary criticism with moral elements carried out and inherited continuously. The period from the 16th to the 18th century witnessed pictorial works inspired by this poetic theme proliferating. The accompanying inscriptions, painting poems, and colophons not only coexisted with the images as an integrated documentary system but also represented reflections on the original work's aesthetics, controversies, and cultural dissemination. During this period, the literati symbol in Suzhou embodied by figures like Tang Yin 唐寅(1470-1524) and the Wen Zhengming 文徵明(1470-1559) 's clan generated paintings centered on "Song of the Pipa" through collaborative social and familial learning. This practice symbolized the fashion and influence within the literati society. As these paintings circulated, also being viewed and collected, crystallizing into "cultural artifacts" with significant value. Collectors and other viewers who encountered them engaged in introspection about poetry and self through their "gaze." Consequently, the colophons they composed formed a psychological lens into the culture of poetry-and-painting, revealing the meaning of the artworks to later generations while permanently rewriting how Bai Juyi's poetry was received and illustrated by posterity.

[560] Zhang Yunmeng (Renmin University of China). *The Composition and Publication of the Seventeen Histories Detailed Summaries (十七史详节) and Jianyang (建阳) Printing Culture from the Southern Song to the Ming Dynasty.*

**Abstract.** Seventeen Histories Detailed Summaries constitutes an abridged version of the official histories from the Records of the Historian (史记) to the new History of the Five Dynasties (新五代史). Throughout historical catalogues, its authorship has been attributed to the renowned Song scholar Lü Zuqian (吕祖谦). Philological scholars of the Qing dynasty largely posited it as a pseudonymous work produced by Jianyang printing workshops in Fujian during the Southern Song to boost sales. Yet these correct interpretations have not gained enough acceptance today. The earliest extant version is a Southern Song fragmentary copy. There are several copies of the Detailed Summaries from the official histories exhibit inconsistent formats and attributed authors, yet whose texts highly overlap with Seventeen Histories Detailed Summaries. Additionally, other similar books exist with substantial textual similarities, though they are actually distinct works. Compiling information of these printed books from Yuan and Ming dynasty reveals that these phenomena stemmed from Jianyang printing houses mutually copying texts, then rebranding them under different titles and authors for commercial gain. Moreover, the printing blocks for this work circulated within the Liu family of printers from the Song to the Ming dynasty, reflecting the continuity of Jianyang's printing industry.

**Keywords:** Seventeen Histories Detailed Summaries, Printing culture in Jianyang, Families of printers

[563] Seongun Park (Harvard University). *What the Record Says—or Doesn't: Reading Silence in Earthquake Records in Early Modern China.*

**Abstract.** This paper asks a simple but consequential question: how, when, and why do some events enter the historical record while others are left unsaid? Through close readings of earthquake entries—and their absences—

in the Qing shilu (the official annals of Qing Dynasty), I examine a critical shift in historiographical practice in eighteenth-century China. I analyze why certain type of earthquakes that had previously been documented with care ceased to appear in the official record, why some were omitted while others were emphasized, and how changing assumptions about "disaster" structured this selective process of record-keeping. In answering these questions, I trace the demoralization and depoliticization process of disaster—its reframing from Heaven's moral–political portents to administratively managed risks—and the political and intellectual conditions that made this shift possible. I also show why earthquakes, among various types of disasters, merit particular attention and how their inherent duality complicates our understanding of this transformation. Central to this inquiry are how representations of disasters evolved in historiographical practices of China, what political and intellectual stakes were involved, and what these shifts reveal about broader changes in Chinese thought regarding the environmental anomalies and the complex interactions between the human and natural worlds. Sometimes, silence – rather than explicit statement – illuminates the deepest structures of meaning. By treating absence itself as an object of interpretation, I seek to expand the evidentiary base for the history of disasters and to contribute to a more nuanced account of environmental history.
**Keywords:** Representation of disasters, Earthquakes, Environmental history, Historiography, Early modern China

[565] Lin Chien-Te (Institute of Religion and Humanities Buddhist Tzu-Chi University). *Confucian Mindfulness: A Comparative Study with Buddhism.*
**Abstract.** Mindfulness has gained global prominence as a mental and spiritual practice. This paper compares the Confucian approach to mindfulness with the established Buddhist notion of sati (念). Drawing from classical Confucian texts (e.g., Analects, Mencius) and Early Buddhist teachings (Āgamas), this study identifies similarities and differences in how feeling and morality are connected. Early Buddhist mindfulness focuses on cultivating samatha (止, calm abiding) and vipassanā (觀, insight) as pathways to ultimate liberation and the cessation of suffering. In contrast, Confucian mindfulness centers on ethical conduct and social unity, illustrating a form of awareness oriented toward moral development and the formation of virtuous character through key principles like ren (仁, benevolence), yi (義, righteousness), and li (禮, ritual propriety).
The paper examines practical applications: the Confucian cultivation of qi (氣), exemplified by Mencius' haoran zhi qi (浩然之氣"Vast, Flowing Energy"), integrates body and mind to enhance ethical responsiveness. Buddhist ānāpānasati (數息觀) focuses on breath observation to develop concentration and insight. These exercises reflect the traditions' differing philosophical goals: Confucian virtue ethics prioritizes relational duties, while Buddhist practice seeks spiritual awakening.
Through comparative analysis, the study highlights common and separate aspects of mindfulness. Rooted in distinct wisdoms, both promote self-discipline, moral integrity, and spiritual growth. This dialogue contributes to a deeper understanding of mindfulness as a cross-cultural resource that can facilitate human flourishing and the realization of world peace.
**Keywords:** Mindfulness, Confucianism, Buddhism, Qi, Ānāpānasati

[571] Wenhao Guan (The Ohio State University), Emily Graf (University of Tübingen) and John Alekna (Peking University). *Knowledge on the Move: Transnational Flows of People, Print, and Expertise in Modern China.*
**Abstract.** This panel explores how knowledge systems in China evolved from their pre-twentieth-century forms into modern configurations through transnational infrastructures of print, institutions, and expertise. In conversation with scholarship in the history of science and technology, print culture, and global history in modern China, we ask how "China," as an object of systematic knowledge, became legible and governable.
The first paper examines how the place name "Manchuria" was transformed into the "Northeast/Three Eastern Provinces" in Chinese geography teachers' guides, which mobilized emotion-laden content to deploy spatial knowledge against Russian and Japanese imperial claims. Paper two investigates Yuan Tongli (1895–1965), a Chinese librarian, and how China's state-funded, publicly oriented library systems adopted global cataloguing standards and international exchanges, reconfiguring Chinese librarianship as an infrastructure for modern disciplines. Paper three explores the history of a German-Chinese hospital and medical school in Shanghai, showing how German imperial medicine, missionary initiatives, and domestic Chinese actors competed and/or collaborated in shaping biomedical authority. The last paper revisits the practice of geo-location in nineteenth-century China, tracing how Jesuit-influenced notions of a gridded globe circulated even while longitudinal practice remained rare, limited, as he argues, by the structures of the print economy and print technology.

Taken together, our panel contributes to the studies of nationalism, imperialism, and state knowledge. These four works demonstrate that the notion of "modern Chinese knowledge" emerged from negotiated and contested encounters among teachers, librarians, physicians, and cartographers across borders, rather than from any single center of innovation.

**Keywords:** Modern Chinese History, Knowledge Production, Global History, STS

**Wenhao Guan (The Ohio State University)** – *Not My Manchuria: Geography Teachers' Guides, Nation-Building, and Knowledge Production in Late Qing and Republican China*

This work investigates the transformation from "Manchuria 滿洲" to the "Northeast/Three Eastern Provinces 東北/東三省" along with China's nation-building projects as they appear in Chinese-language geography teachers' guides 地理教授書. Over the past two decades, Chinese- and English-language scholarship has noted the significance of textbooks in constructing a modern Chinese nation-state. However, students did not always read these geography textbooks by themselves: they were taught and guided by teachers and by geography teachers' guides, which included detailed geographical knowledge and strong emotions (anger, anxiety, sorrow, and pride) that could hardly be found in associated textbooks. By showing teachers what and how to teach "Manchuria," my work argues that teachers' guides also played a significant role in shaping and consolidating the begonia-leaf-shaped Chinese nation, whose spatial imagination must not be separated from geographical knowledge and emotion-laden teaching methods. Furthermore, it is essential to note that the term "Manchuria" was not always used in these geography teachers' guides. While a few of these guides retained "Manchuria," many others emphasized the territorial imagination of the "Three Eastern Provinces" or the "Northeast" within a newborn Chinese nation-state. My work demonstrates that the spatial imagination and geographical knowledge associated with "Manchuria" were constantly changing, in which China's nation-building projects wielded geographical knowledge and emotion-laden teaching methods to compete with Russian and Japanese imperialist powers.

**Emily Graf (University of Tübingen)** – *Competing over Biomedicine: German Medical Schools and Hospitals in early 20th Century China*

The biomedical landscape in China during the early 20th century featured a diverse landscape of medical actors and groups, with English, American, German, Japanese, and French methods of medical education competing institutionally, academically, and territorially. The German Empire, driven by colonial ambitions, was an actor in the medical field, supporting German doctors, medical schools, and hospitals in China, for example, in its former colony, founding a medical faculty at the Deutsch-Chinesische Hochschule in Qingdao (1909-1914). The Tung Chee Hospital in Shanghai was established in 1900 by Dr. Erich Paulun (1862-1909), a German naval doctor. After Paulun's death in 1909, the hospital was renamed Paulun Hospital. This presentation is based on a manuscript, an institutional history of the Paulun Hospital from 1899 to 1945, based on materials from the German General Consulate in Shanghai. When the medical school became a Chinese medical school and the hospital remained a German hospital, how was medicine taught and studied at these two sites differently? The historiography of this Shanghai-based hospital and medical school offers insights into global medical history, as the hospital operated throughout both World Wars and served as a site of Chinese-German rapprochement and tensions. The analysis of this historical narrative sheds light on how Germany rationalized its declining influence in medical education and practice in China and reveals how it coped with the Chinese state becoming an increasingly powerful actor in the medical field, also due to the cooperative failure of the various Western medical schools in China.

**John Alekna (Peking University)** – *The Longitude Problem: Print, Mathematics, and Geolocation in Nineteenth Century China*

In nineteenth-century China, longitudinal coordinates were widely understood conceptually. From the end of Qianlong's reign, but during the Jiaqing-Daoguang period especially, the idea of a spherical earth divided into 360 degrees spread to remote places across China, as evidenced by local gazetteers describing a county's longitude. Though ultimately derived from Jesuit translations of the previous two centuries, this idea circulated independently within China, through imperially-endorsed court texts and the movement of bureaucrats around the empire. But a problem emerges from these passages:

they provide little evidence that longitude was actually being measured and calculated on the ground. Rather, these passages indicate that estimates of longitude were being derived from early eighteenth-century Jesuit gazetteers. The idea was there, but not the practice. Why? Using the evidence of mathematical texts, surveying handbooks, and diaries of cartographers in late nineteenth century China, this paper will offer a number of theories about the limitations to longitudinal practice. Dismissing purely cultural explanations, it will focus on the limited circulation of trigonometrical and astronomical tables, without which the mathematical calculation of longitude is exceedingly

difficult. A comparative discussion of the methods of longitudinal calculation (east-west and relative), and latitudinal calculation (north-south and absolute) shows just how challenging this measurement would have been in an environment without cheap, densely printed handbooks. While the cause of the absence of this dense mathematical and astronomical data is difficult to disentangle, this paper will propose that the print economy and print technology may have played a role.

[572] Linda Chu (National Taiwan Normal University), Giulia Falato (University of Parma), Borum Kim (Anyang University), Thierry Meynard (Sun-Yat Sen University), Gang Song (University of Hong Kong) and Sophie Wei (The Chinese University of Hong Kong). *Connected Textuality: Transcultural Translations of Western Ideas in Early Modern Asia.*

**Abstract.** Adopting an interdisciplinary lens, this panel investigates how Western ideas—philosophical, scientific, literary, and artistic—were adapted and reimagined across early modern Asia (c. 1500–1800). Focusing on translated texts, commentaries, and local enactments, we examine how post-Renaissance European knowledge took root in Asian contexts. Rather than seeing "translation" as a one-way transmission, we approach it as a dynamic, intercultural dialogue.

Drawing on intellectual history, comparative literature, and cultural studies, the panel highlights the textual, visual, and material strategies through which thinkers engaged with new knowledge. Case studies include the infusion of Jesuit networks of meaning into Ming-Qing literary practices, the reinterpretation of Aesopian fables in Chinese political discourse, the Catholic introduction of the Biblical canon in dialogue with Confucian classics, Figurist reinterpretations of Jesus as a Confucian sage through readings of the Yijing, new findings on the Jesuit–Confucian translation of the soul in Lingyan lishao and its fusion of Aristotelian and Florentine theological sources, the Jesuit moral synthesis reframing European virtue and kingship within a Confucian vision, and Confucian reformers' engagement with Chinese Jesuit texts in late Joseon Korea. Together, these studies show how Western theories were creatively reshaped through local languages and intellectual frameworks.

By mapping these trajectories, the panel challenges monolithic narratives of intellectual diffusion and reveals a vibrant landscape of reciprocal engagement. We link early modern translation practices to present-day debates in global knowledge production, showing how historical models of connected textuality inform contemporary inquiry. Ultimately, the panel underscores the diversity and co-creative power of transcultural exchange, demonstrating how early modern encounters between East and West continue to shape global scholarship today.

**Keywords:** Transculturation, East-West cultural encounters, Sino-European knowledge circulation, Confucian-Christian dialogue, Jesuit missions and translation networks

**Linda Chu (National Taiwan Normal University)** – *Comparative Constellations: Mapping Multilingual Jesuit Networks of Meaning in Late Imperial China*

The full story of the multilingual metaphor as introduced and developed by the Jesuits in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century China remains largely untold. This project brings together digital humanities methods and Jesuit studies to examine how early missionaries engaged with traditions of metaphor across historical, linguistic, literary, and cultural boundaries. It sheds light on overlooked dimensions of this history, offering a new perspective on metaphor as a concept both translated and adapted, and on the multilingual networks of meaning that emerged in the process. Adopting the Benjaminian model of constellation, the project focuses on key intercultural encounters: the Jesuits' adaptation of classical Latin and Greek rhetorical theories—drawing on figures such as Cicero, Quintilian, and Aristotle; the reappropriation of Mohist and other pre-Qin thought in the late imperial period; and Jesuit engagements with (and often against) Daoist and Buddhist texts and terminologies in translation. Central to the study is the question of how rhetorical frameworks were translated, reframed, and synthesized across cultural frontiers—often through paraphrase, indirect citation, or conceptual transformation. By uncovering how Jesuit authors reshaped classical rhetorical knowledge for Chinese audiences, the project seeks not only to illuminate the intercultural shaping of late imperial intellectual life, but also to demonstrate the value of digital tools in advancing literary-historical research. Situated at the intersection of Jesuit studies, comparative rhetoric, and digital humanities, this study contributes to broader efforts in classical source recovery and the study of cross-cultural knowledge transmission.

**Giulia Falato (University of Parma)** – *Recontextualizing the Body Politic: Aesop, Jesuits, and Confucianism in Early Modern Translation*

"The Belly and the Members" (Perry 130) is a well-known fable from the Aesopian tradition. For centuries, it has served as a powerful metaphor for analysing the functions of the res publica from multiple perspectives and for

advocating social cooperation as a means of preserving political stability. First strategically redeployed by the Roman patrician Agrippa Menenius Lanatus (d. 493 BCE) during the Secession of the Plebs (494 BCE), the parable reached China in the 17th century. Over the following two centuries, it became part of a corpus of translated Aesopian fables used for proselytism and moral instruction.

This paper focuses on its first appearance in a Chinese publication, namely Kuangyi 況義 (Morals from Comparison, 1625) by Nicolas Trigault S.J. (1577–1628) and the Chinese convert Zhang Geng 張賡 (c. 1570–1646/47). In this context, the fable was reinterpreted as a warning against the dangers of undermining political authority and the ensuing threats to social harmony. By examining how the body politic metaphor was recontextualized for a late-Ming literati audience, this study argues that the translators drew on traditional Confucian discourse while also introducing disruptive elements. The ideal society portrayed in the fable's moral opens a broader discussion on the universality versus relativity of the body politic metaphor and its cross-cultural interpretations.

**Borum Kim (Sogang University)** – *Deconstructing Orthodoxy: Jeong Yakyong's Confucian Reform and Jesuit Conceptual Resources*

This paper examines how Jeong Yakyong (1762–1836), a prominent Confucian reformer in late Joseon Korea, engaged with Jesuit missionaries' Chinese texts. Jeong absorbed key ideas—such as liberum arbitrium (自主之權) and rational/spiritual substance (靈體)—and reinterpreted Confucian classics through this lens. He emphasized human agency, moral choice, and social responsibility, challenging the metaphysical determinism of the Neo-Confucian li–qi theory. This ethical framework provided the conceptual foundation for his political thought as well. In works such as "Discourse on Tang" (湯論) and "Origins of Rulership" (原牧), Jeong argued that political legitimacy must be rooted in the consent of the people, and that dynastic revolution (yeokseong hyeokmyeong, 易姓革命) could be morally justified in response to tyranny. Although such political ideas are not explicitly stated in the Jesuit texts Jeong read, his views parallel those of early modern Jesuit thinkers such as Suárez, Molina, and Mariana, who extended liberum arbitrium into the realm of civic ethics and theorized the concepts of popular sovereignty and resistance. Departing from previous studies that either interpret Jeong's thought through the lens of "modernity" or compare it with medieval scholasticism, this paper offers a structural comparison between his reform of Confucianism and early modern Jesuit thought. It argues that cross-cultural conceptual transfer, mediated through translation, enabled reform from within the Confucian tradition.

**Thierry Meynard (Sun-Yat Sen University)** – *The moral and political writings of Alfonso Vagnone in China: The Education of the prince in the Zhiping xixue*

In the Late Ming, the Jesuits introduced a wide range of learning from the West, but they were quite silent about Western history and politics. The Italian Jesuit Alfonso Vagnone stands as an exception with his Zhiping xixue (Western Learning on the Pacification of the World), a work which has not received much attention by scholars. We shall first see how the Zhiping fits within the wisdom or moral literature produced by Vagnone, clarifying the issue of the sources of the Zhiping. In the second part, we shall deal with the first two chapters of the first juan, which presents the theoretical part of the Zhiping arguing for the legitimacy of monarchy, yet supported by a wealth of classical references. After the initial two chapters, Vagnone discusses in the nine following chapters of the first juan and in the ten chapters of the second juan the moral and intellectual virtues of the ruler, and our analysis will constitute the third part of this paper. Finally, because Vagnone thinks in term of hereditary monarchy, we shall analyze how the ruler should inculcate to his son from an early age proper moral virtues. While the text presents us a program of moral conversion for the ruler and the prince, we should pay attention to what this implies to the reader, who is unlikely to be a ruler or a prince, in terms of his or her own transformation.

**Gang Song (University of Hong Kong)** – *Scriptures of the Orthodox Way: The Catholic Conception of the Biblical Canon in Late Imperial China*

Based on a comprehensive survey of early Chinese Catholic biblical texts, this paper aims to uncover the formation of the Catholic conception of the biblical canon in China during the 17th and the 18th centuries, a subject that remains underexplored despite abundant research on the history of Chinese Bible translations. For various reasons, Catholic missionaries in China did not fully engage biblical translations to promote the canonical status of the Bible, which was markedly different from the historical precedents of canonization of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin scriptures. Nonetheless, the missionaries frequently made references to the scriptural texts that they translated into Chinese—including the Decalogue, Credo, Pater Noster, etc.—to promote the orthodox Catholic doctrines. They meanwhile took efforts to introduce the content, history, and authority of the Bible in their abridged or compiled translations of biblical texts in Chinese, with a focus on Wanrilue jing 萬日畧經 (Evangelium, i.e., the Gospels) as the core scriptures for Chinese converts. More noticeably, the missionary translators attempted to re-shape the boundaries of orthodoxy and heterodoxy within the Chinese context, aligning Catholic biblical scriptures with

authoritative Confucian classics, and on the other hand, criticizing Buddhist scriptures as heretic texts. The emerging Catholic conception of the biblical canon provided support to biblical translations and missionary work in China. Through such a multilayered process of knowledge transmission, interpretation, and negotiation, the biblical canon enacted a special type of connected textuality between post-Renaissance Europe and late imperial China.

**Sophie Wei (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)** – *Sage, Hexagram, Cross: Figurist Pathways to a Chinese Jesus as Sheng Ren*

This talk examines how early Qing Jesuit Figurists reimagined Jesus between the hexagrams of the Yijing and the symbol of the Cross, recasting him as a Chinese sheng ren 聖人. Through speculative readings of the Yijing—in which numbers, diagrams, and omens are made to prefigure creation, fall, and redemption—they transformed a distant Christian messiah into a recognizable Confucian sage. Christian devotion was rewritten in the ethical and emotional grammar of loyalty (zhong) and filial piety (xiao), making "religious emotions" legible within a Confucian moral universe.

Drawing on Chinese works alongside Latin and French manuscripts by Bouvet, Prémare, and Foucquet, the talk traces how the category of sheng ren was stretched from a classical political-moral ideal to accommodate Jesus as ultimate sage. In texts addressed to the Kangxi court and in writings circulating back to Europe, Jesus emerges with plural, dialogic identities: as Confucian exemplar, bearer of the Dao, and crucified savior.

By following these Figurist "pathways" across languages, genres, and audiences, the talk argues that their translation practices did more than adapt Christianity to Chinese culture. They forged a shared conceptual and affective space in which sage, hexagram, and Cross could be thought together, opening new perspectives for the comparative study of religion, translation, and the global history of emotions.

[573] Ruoqian Zhang (Nagoya University), Xiaomeng Li (Nagoya University), Chen Yang (Nagoya University) and Ying Wang (Nagoya University). *The Body as Political Medium in Cold War East Asia: Case Studies in Theater and Dance.*

**Abstract.** This panel investigates how physical performance functioned as a site where national ideology, diplomacy, and aesthetics intersected in East Asian performing arts during the Cold War. It brings together case studies that address the representation of the female body, the reorganization of ethnic dance, the diplomatic uses of gender performance, and the dynamics of cultural adaptation across socialist and capitalist contexts, emphasizing the interplay between politics, embodiment, and artistic innovation. A comparison of "White Snake" imagery in Japanese cinema and Chinese Peking Opera in the 1950s demonstrates how the female body was inscribed with divergent political subjectivities within the two blocs. The reconfiguration of folk elements in the dance Lotus Dance further illustrates how aesthetic ambiguity enabled forms of cultural diplomacy that transcended ideological boundaries and facilitated cross-cultural dialogue. A study of Yue Opera and Japan's Takarazuka Girls Revue reveals that, even amid strict artistic regulation in China, the aesthetics of male gender performance by actresses were strategically mobilized in international cultural exchange. Finally, Japan's remaking of Chinese anti-imperialist ethnic dance dramas highlights a postwar reversal of prewar "Asianism," entangling artistic production with leftist movements and debates over Japan's war responsibility. Together, these cases illuminate the complex ways in which bodily expression and performance became instrumental in China's international cultural strategies during the Cold War, demonstrating how embodiment, gendered representation, and aesthetic choices were mobilized to negotiate political and diplomatic agendas across borders.

**Keywords:** theater, dance, public diplomacy, Cold War era, the female body

**Ruoqian Zhang (Nagoya University)** – *Female Bodies on Stage and Screen: Political Reimagining of the White Snake Myth in Cold War East Asia*

This study investigates Cold War–era reinterpretations of the White Snake legend in China and Japan through the analytical framework of body politics. In 1950s Japan, the film The Legend of the White Serpent (1956) cast Li Xianglan as an "imagined Chinese woman," whose exoticized and idealized feminine body reveals the lingering colonial memory embedded within commercial entertainment. Her performance exemplifies how the female body was mobilized to stage fantasies of cultural dominance and cross-cultural desire during the postwar reconstruction period. In contrast, the Peking opera The Legend of the White Snake, produced in the early People's Republic of China, was guided by socialist ideology. The traditionally ambiguous White Snake was reconfigured as a virtuous and heroic figure, embodying the state-promoted image of the ideal socialist woman. This redefinition highlights how women's bodies and their moralized representations were utilized to construct new political subjectivities within the socialist cultural framework. By comparing these two productions, this research analyzes differences in

bodily representation, gender narrative, and political context. It demonstrates how the female body functioned as a medium of ideological inscription under Cold War cultural competition. Moreover, the study reveals how a shared mythological text becomes narratively fragmented and situated within distinct power structures when transmitted across national and geopolitical boundaries.

**Xiaomeng Li (Nagoya University)** – *The Transnational Politics of Gender Performance: A Comparative Study of Yue Opera and the Takarazuka Revue in Cultural Diplomacy during the 1950s and 1990s*

This paper examines Yue Opera's development from the Cold War through the 1990s, focusing on its all-female performance tradition and the aesthetic of the female Xiaosheng (women performing male roles). Utilizing overseas performance records of the Shanghai Yue Opera Troupe—which consistently maintained all-female casts on its foreign tours—this article examines how Yue Opera contributed to China's cultural exchanges and how its distinctive gendered style operated in various diplomatic contexts. It begins with an analysis of the troupe's 1955 tours to the GDR and USSR, the PRC's first professional theatre exchange. This initial deployment projected a cultural image of emotional expressiveness and refinement that served specific strategic goals within Cold War diplomacy, at times standing in contrast to prevailing revolutionary aesthetics. The discussion then follows Yue Opera's trajectory through the Cultural Revolution and into the Reform Era. Crucially, even under stringent regulation of domestic theatrical styles, the women-only performance tradition and the aesthetics of Xiaosheng were deliberately sustained within the constrained arena of international exchange. By the 1990s, through tours to Hong Kong, Japan, and European countries, Yue Opera's recognizable style re-entered global cultural circulation, contributing to representations of Chinese performing arts. Finally, the paper briefly compares Yue Opera with the Takarazuka Revue. Their divergent political positions, institutional structures, and diplomatic functions clarify how gendered performance operated across varied East Asian contexts. This study underscores Yue Opera's significance for understanding China's cultural diplomacy and the wider transnational circulation of gendered performance in the region.

**Chen Yang (Nagoya University)** – *Choreographing Aesthetic Diplomacy: Dai Ailian's Lotus Dance and Cultural Exchange in 1950's China*

Born in Trinidad and trained in London, Dai Ailian (1916–2006) created The Lotus Dance (1952) at Premier Zhou Enlai's request. She recast Shanxi folk material into a "diplomatic aesthetic," a state-mediated strategy that mobilized folkloric softness to offset ideological rigidity in Cold War cultural presentation. The work's aesthetic indeterminacy, produced by its distance from socialist-realist didacticism and its re-coding into an easily legible " Orient," enabled it to circulate across ideological blocs. Between 1953 and 1960, it toured more than a dozen socialist, non-aligned, and capitalist nations. Using 1954 performance footage and 1955 National Day parade photographs, I treat the dance's visual features as evidence of its ideological re-scriptability. The Kunqu-opera-derived "gliding" vocabulary—specifically the step known as Yuan Chang—in the 1954 footage generates a visual affinity with the Soviet Belotska's glide-dance idiom, facilitating non-verbal resonance within the socialist camp. However, the dances performed in China's 1955 parade revealed a distinct function, as they were deliberately juxtaposed with displays of military hardware. Here, its aesthetic ambiguity operated as a "soft idiom," articulating an additional register of state visibility alongside the overt manifestations of military strength.

I argue that the significance of The Lotus Dance lies in this capacity for asymmetrical cultural translation. This unique quality not only secured the work's revered status in both contemporary and retrospective evaluations but also established an enduring aesthetic legacy that transcends its original political context.

**Ying Wang (Nagoya University)** – *Chinese Dance-Drama in the 1960s Japan: Reconfiguring Imperial Memory through Dance Exchange*

This paper examines two pioneering cases of the transplantation of Chinese national dance-drama (minzu wuju) into Japan during the 1960s: the Hanayagi Tokubei Dance Company's The Magic Lotus Lantern (1963) and the Matsuyama Ballet Company's The Red Detachment of Women (1966). By analyzing the intentions behind these adaptations, their reception in Japan, and their significance within the context of Cold War cultural diplomacy, the paper investigates how these works mediated ideas of "nationalization" and "revolutionization" in dance, while simultaneously reshaping memories of prewar imperial cultural relations through embodied practices. For Hanayagi Tokubei, The Magic Lotus Lantern served as a catalyst for the modernization of Japanese dance and the development of dance-drama, drawing on the hybrid choreographic techniques of Chinese dance-drama, which blended folk dance, jingju, and ballet. Meanwhile, the Matsuyama Ballet Company's staging of The Red Detachment of Women was closely tied to its long-standing pursuit of "nationalized ballet," integrating bodily representations of labor and daily life into its creative ballet practice. Learning from China also constituted a symbolic reversal of Japan's prewar "Asianism," and the re-performance of an explicitly anti-imperialist work intersected with postwar

debates on leftist movements and war responsibility in Japan. By comparing these cases, the paper demonstrates that the transplantation of Chinese dance-drama not only stimulated the modernization and nationalization of artistic genres in Japan but also created a cultural arena in which historical memories of the Japan–China relationship were renegotiated through embodied artistic exchange.

[576] Weiyi Huang (Nanjing University, Jiangsu, China). *When Translation Produces Images: Rethinking the Pearl Behind the Neck in Dunhuang Nāga Imagery.*

**Abstract.** The flaming pearl positioned behind the neck of dragon-shaped nāgas in Dunhuang Buddhist art poses an unresolved iconographic problem. No clear precedent exists in earlier South or Central Asian nāga imagery, nor in Chinese visual traditions. Buddhist Scriptures and non-Buddhist texts in China consistently place the dragon jewel under the chin, on the head, in the mouth, in the hand, or inside the brain, but never behind the neck. This double absence rules out direct transmission or scriptural illustration.

Spatio-temporal evidence places the motif's first appearance in sixth-century northern China (Shandong, Hebei, Henan), from where it spread westward to Dunhuang. Its emergence was driven not by a fixed prototype but by translation-induced recombination. The translation of nāga as lóng 龍 linked Buddhist concepts to indigenous Chinese dragon lore, while the translation of maṇi as móní zhū 摩尼珠 gradually transformed the images of maṇi, a term covering gems with various shapes, into a flaming sphere as the dominant form. The Indian association of nāgas with maṇi thus dovetailed with a preexisting Chinese convention that paired dragons with circular motifs such as bì-discs and stars. Within this reconfigured semantic space, abstract appendages on the dragon's neck, variously rendered as fins, crests, or flames, gradually merged with the newly localized image of a luminous pearl.

The pearl behind the neck, therefore, emerged from translation-driven recombination across semantic and visual systems. Its limited circulation and unstable iconography mark it as experimental and non-canonical compared to widespread dragon-pearl compositions. The motif thus offers a case study of how medieval Chinese Buddhist art generated new images precisely within the space opened by translation.

**Keywords:** Nāga-Dragon Conflation, Maṇi Jewel, Flaming Pearl, Chinese Buddhist Art, Medieval China

[579] Agne Veisaite (The Chinese University of Hong Kong). *Technology and the Tool-Self in the Zhuangzi.*

**Abstract.** Contrary to portrayal of Daoism as anti-technological, The Zhuangzi is rich in technical terms and metaphors, evoking concepts such as skill (qiao 巧), artistry (shu 術), machines (ji 機), ability (ji 技), among other various tools and instruments. Rather than addressing technology in broad terms, I will solely focus on the usage of tools in the Zhuangzi, distinguishing equipment into two major styles – what I call “rectifying tools”, which impose pre-designed forms onto the medium, and tools employed by sagely artisans in dialogical, responsive practices. Drawing on the etymology of wo 我 – commonly translated as “I” or “self”– I interpret wo-self as constitutive through its doings, particularly via the use of tools or equipment. In this reading, wo is situated within social roles and embodied practices, shaped by inherited conditions and names (ming 名/命). While focusing on tools in the Zhuangzi, this exploration provides broader implication on technology today. Although technology has evolved, we remain tool-bearing agents, increasingly shaped by, while simultaneously shaping, artificial systems. The Zhuangzi, I propose, does not judge the value of technology/tools based on their complexity, but rather on the kind of engagement they cultivate. Thus, the text provides fruitful content for reflecting critically rather than dismissively on contemporary challenges surrounding AI, automation and their role in shaping human selfhood.

**Keywords:** Technology, Tools, Self, Zhuangzi, AI

[581] Ruoran Pei (SOAS University of London), Timmy Chih-Ting Chen (Hong Kong Metropolitan University), Chun-Chi Wang (Taipei National University of the Arts) and Qionglin Lou (University College London). *Screening Solidarity: Gendered Dilemmas in Sinophone Cinema.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines how Sinophone cinema stages women’s social roles and the tensions these representations produce. Combining archival study, visual analysis, stardom research, and documentary reflection, four papers probe the interplay between historical events, cinematic narrative, screen performance and documentary practice.

The first paper traces documented cases of collective female suicide in the early twentieth-century Canton region and reads Ye Weilin’s 1985 novella Five Girls and a Rope alongside its film adaptations - The Wedding Maidens (Wang Jin, 1990) and the Taiwanese remake Five Girls and a Rope (Yeh Hung-Wei, 1991) - to show how artistic works portray marriage resistance while complicating idealized sisterhood. The second paper investigates Connie Chan’s song-and-dance stardom and the constructed spectatorship of factory girls in Her Tender Love (Lui

Kei, 1969), demonstrating how performance mediates classed and gendered aspirations. The third paper rereads Edward Yang's That Day, on the Beach (1983) to reveal tensions between narratives of female empowerment and capitalist modernity's disciplinary logics. The fourth paper analyses Small Talk (Huang Hui-Chen, 2016) and Bad Women of China (He Xiaopei, 2021), arguing that queer documentary reframes ageing as a site of temporal resistance and alternative memory.
Collectively, the panel asks: (1) how filmic grammar and adaptation strategies present gendered obligations and reveal women's social image in Sinophone societies; (2) how portrayals of solidarity or empowerment may occlude power relations or normative pressures; and (3) what ethical responsibilities attend representations of intimate or traumatic female experiences.
**Keywords:** Sinophone cinema, sisterhood, stardom and spectatorship, female-centered narratives, documentary memory

**Ruoran Pei (SOAS)** – *Beyond Sisterhood: Collective Suicide, Adaptation, and Patriarchal Discipline in Five Girls and a Rope*
This paper investigates how real incidents of collective female suicide and coercive sisterhood are represented and reinterpreted in Five Girls and a Rope, Ye Weilin's award-winning 1985 novella, and its two film adaptations: The Wedding Maidens (Wang Jin, 1990) and the Taiwanese eponymous remake Five Girls and a Rope (Yeh Hung-Wei, 1991). While Ye's story does not specify time or place, linguistic and cultural hints suggest a mountainous area setting near Guangxi in the early twentieth century. Both films preserve the tragic ending - the five heroines' collective hanging - yet diverge strikingly in landscape and aesthetic register: the mainland film locates the drama in humid Lingnan, whereas the Taiwanese remake transposes it to the arid northwest.
Drawing on local gazetteers, missionary records, and pictorial magazines from the Qing to the Republican era, the paper contextualizes the story within documented anti-marriage group suicides in Shunde and Panyu, argues that these cases likely informed Ye's creative imagination - a connection tied to his biographical background - and reads his narrative intent as functioning more like a broader allegory. Combining close textual-visual analysis with historical-ethnographic triangulation, the study shows that "sisterhood," often idealized as mutual care, conceals moral coercion and emotional entrapment that may culminate in collective destruction. Artistic creation thus functions not only as aesthetic reconstruction but also as a historiographical act that transforms regional trauma into cultural memory and unsettles the presumed stability of female solidarity in patriarchal China.
**Timmy Chih-Ting Chen (Hong Kong Metropolitan University)** – *The Stardom of "Movie-fan Princess" and the Spectatorship of "Factory Girls" in Her Tender Love (1969)*
As part of my research project titled "Cross-Cultural Collaboration and Inter-Asia Identities: Wartime Shanghai and Postwar Hong Kong Song-and-Dance Films, 1931–1972," this paper explores the negotiation between the song-and-dance stardom of Connie Chan Po-chu (nicknamed "Movie-fan Princess") of the late 1960s and the invention of spectatorship of "factory girls" through the case study of a Cantonese youth song-and-dance film, Her Tender Love (Lui Kei/Lu Chi, 1969), assisted by the Singapore government and released just before Christmas in 1969. Connie Chan's stardom, built upon her fan base of female factory workers, has often been compared with Josephine Siao, whose fans were middle class university students. I argue that in Her Tender Love the stardom of the Princess of Movie Fans and the spectatorship and fandom of factory girls are meta-cinematically constructed through the song-and-dance sequences at three levels: first, the resilience of romantic love despite downward mobility; second, the return of the diasporic (or what Jing Jing Chang discusses as "remigration") from Singapore as part of Southeast Asia to Hong Kong; and the didactic celebration of sisterhood, self-reliance, sacrifice, and subject position of factory girls as the film's target audience in contrast to either university students or teddy girls. What is at stake is not only the dancing feet and singing voices, but also a social commentary on the laboring hands of the postwar Hong Kong female factory workers of the 1960s.
**Chun-Chi Wang (Taipei National University of the Arts)** – *Gender and the Crisis of Modernity: A Re-reading of Edward Yang's That Day, on the Beach (1983)*
Scholarship on Edward Yang has predominantly framed his work as a hallmark of Taiwan's cinematic modernism, and his female-centered narratives against the backdrop of Taiwan's rapid modernization in the 1980s mark his singularity among his peers in the Taiwan New Cinema. By establishing the film's genealogical affiliation with the traditions of "Wenyi" and the "Chinese Nora" of the May Fourth Movement, this paper re-examines his debut feature film, That Day, on the Beach (1983), to contest this common assessment, arguing that beneath a seemingly celebratory account of female empowerment lies a sharp critique of conformity to capitalism. In contrast, the missing husband, born from a failure to adapt, serves as an emblem of refusal to integrate—one that, in his

alienation, achieves a greater existential integrity than the woman's pragmatic assimilation.

**Qionglin Lou (University College London)**

*Queering Ageing Women: Alternative Memory, and Temporal Resistance in Sinophone Cinema*

This paper aims to offer a dynamic and fluid picture of women on screen by foregrounding queer older women as subjects who unsettle normative expectations of gender, ageing, and memory in Sinophone cinema. Through a comparative analysis of Small Talk (Huang Hui-chen, 2016) and Bad Women of China (He Xiaopei, 2021), the paper demonstrates how independent documentary practices visualise ageing not as decline or withdrawal, but as a complex site of temporal negotiation, affective agency, and alternative remembrance. Small Talk reveals the queer homelessness experienced by an ageing lesbian mother whose life has been shaped by forced domestic violence and the political-moral regulation of postwar Taiwan. Through silence, opacity, and unresolved temporal loops, the film exposes ageing as a suspended condition in which queer subjectivity persists despite historical repression. By contrast, Bad Women of China mobilises intergenerational dialogue, humour, and affective lightness to reclaim "badness" as a queer-feminist position. Its playful relationality and fragmentary recollections construct an alternative archive that challenges state-sanctioned narratives of good womanhood. Here, queer ageing becomes a site of reinvention: a mode of living and remembering that stresses intimacy and improvisation.Taken together, the two films map a spectrum of queer temporalities that resist chrononormative life-course expectations tied to reproduction, filial duty, and linear historical coherence. Rather than restoring visibility to older women through fixed identity categories, these documentaries reveal ageing as a dynamic, relational, and open-ended process. The paper argues that queer documentary reimagines ageing women as agents who reshape both memory and the cultural imaginaries of Sinophone modernity.

[589] Gaia Perini (University of Bologna). *Orphans of the Twentieth Century: Generational Narratives in the Work of "New Dongbei Writers" Shuang Xuetao and Ban Yu.*

**Abstract.** The phenomenon of the "Dongbei Renaissance" has long taken center stage in China, attracting the attention of literary critics and generating a number of debates. One frequently discussed topic concerns the role of generational narrative within the works of the "new Dongbei writers", particularly Shuang Xuetao and Ban Yu. In fact, many of their texts revolve around members of the young urban precariat, also known as the "second-generation poor", who recount their worker-fathers' traumatic experiences during the reforms of the 1990s, when the danwei system was dismantled and millions were laid off. The family microcosm at the heart of these works illuminates the broader historical process through which China has shifted from the socialist work unit's "industrial citizenship" to today's "zombie citizenship". This contribution will survey the various interpretations offered of this narrative mode, before examining Shuang Xuetao's and Ban Yu's engagement with twentieth-century history. In their writings, the twentieth century alternately appears as an unresolved trauma, as nostalgia for a lost childhood, or even as a furious murderous impulse, while from a stylistic and narratological perspective their works clearly resonate with the literature of the current century. The premise of this contribution is that it is precisely the connection to China's past, always poised between memory and oblivion, that enables the "new Dongbei literature" to transcend the borders of the Northeast and acquire a universal significance.

**Keywords:** New Dongbei literature, Shuang Xuetao, Ban Yu, Generational narrative

[590] Philip Clart (Leipzig University), Vincent Goossaert (École pratique des hautes études (Université Paris Sciences et Lettres )), Yangyang Lan (École pratique des hautes études (Université Paris Sciences et Lettres )), Shi-Yu Su (Leipzig University) and Christian Meyer (Free University of Berlin). *Chinese Religious Text Cultures from the Seventeenth to the Twenty-First Century.*

**Abstract.** This panel addresses the massive production of religious texts in the modern (1600–1900) and contemporary (post-1900) Chinese world, which is now largely available but unexplored. Long relegated to the closed rooms of libraries uninterested in such material, the tens of thousands of religious books printed since the late imperial period have become available over the last twenty years through massive collections of reprints, as well as through libraries around the globe digitizing their collections. Important collections of rare Chinese religious texts in German, French, Japanese, and US libraries (e.g., Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Waseda University, Harvard University) are now accessible but so far have been employed as primary sources by scholars to a limited extent only. This textual production continues unabated in the present, albeit in vastly different political, social, and technological settings. The impact of digital text production and dissemination on these textual cultures has barely been begun to be studied. The four papers in this panel address this corpus by means of a survey paper, a historical case study of the publishing history of one important text (the

Taishang ganyingpian), and two ethnographic field studies of the publishing activities of religious groups in Taiwan: spirit-writing cults and lay Buddhist organizations. These papers present findings from a joint French-German research project that will be concluded in the fall of 2026. It is closely tied to the "Chinese Religious Text Authority" (https://crta.info) database project.

**Keywords:** religious texts, religious identity, religious publishing, print cultures, morality books, Buddhism, spirit-writing

**Vincent Goossaert (EPHE, PSL)** – *A Quantitative Approach to Late Imperial Chinese Religious Text Production*

This presentation will use the CRTA (https://crta.info) open-access database to explore a large corpus of mostly printed editions of religious texts (over 6,000 editions from the Song to 1949). Whereas existing research is limited to a few case studies or specific presses, CRTA allows us for the first time to attempt a broad survey of all existing editions (including all the different reprints of popular texts and scriptures) and to measure the relative importance of various actors, genres and formats. This glimpse of the larger picture of the existing Chinese religious literature will in turn raise new research questions. The presentation will propose various ways to quantify the evolution of religious printing focusing on the period between the late Ming and the 1930s. It will look at geography (what were the main regions printing editions?), textual genres (based on a general typology, and measuring the numbers of editions in various genres over time), and types of institutions involved in printing and distributing religious texts (monasteries, charities, private presses, religious publishing houses).

**Yangyang Lan (EPHE/PSL)** – *The Taishang ganyingpian: A Short Publishing History*

The Taishang ganyingpian 太上感應篇 (The Supreme Lord's tract on action and retribution, hereafter Ganyingpian) has been the most revered morality book in the Chinese world for many centuries, and it continues to be printed, commented, learnt by rote, and ritually performed in countless contexts. This essay proposes to sketch the first comprehensive overview of nearly one thousand years of disseminating the Ganyingpian, primarily by printing it in a large variety of formats. It is one result of a collaborative project on late imperial and modern Chinese religious print culture and is based on the online open-access database CRTA (https://crta.info/wiki/Main_Page), where all editions of the Ganyingpian discussed here have their own page describing them in some detail. We have assembled a corpus of 124 editions of the Ganyingpian, that forms the core of the source base for this essay.

The paper begins by sketching in broad stokes the history of the Ganyingpian from its appearance in the early twelfth century to the present before looking at the different formats in which it was diffused in late imperial times, especially in print form, either on its own, with commentaries, or within books including other unrelated texts. We then focus on our corpus of commented editions, which we describe chronologically, and then move on to the question of illustrations. The conclusion will attempt a preliminary analysis of the most popular, i.e., widely reprinted, versions of the Ganyingpian.

**Philip Clart (Leipzig University)** – *Religious Text Production and Distribution in the Digital Age: Recent Developments among Taiwanese Spirit-Writing Cults*

Text production in Taiwanese spirit-writing cults (luantang 鸞堂, "phoenix halls") is strongly linked to their religious self-understanding as having received a mission from Heaven ("to proclaim moral transformation on behalf of Heaven," daitian xuanhua 代天宣化), as a key tool for the creation of salvific merit (gongde 功德), and at the same time is the economic mainstay of the temple organizations in the form of the merit money donated by the faithful for the printing and distribution of morality books. What then happens when the technology of text distribution switches to a digital format, in which it is no longer possible to quantify the merit earned by numbers of print copies? Based on both field research and text studies, this paper traces the impact of digital publishing of religious texts on the beliefs and practices of Taiwanese spirit-writing cults. It argues that these voluntary associations try to achieve a wider reach for their revealed texts and ritual offerings while at the same time trying to avoid a weakening of the religious experience of the offline religious group. Where this balance cannot be achieved, they tend to privilege the interests of the offline community over the potential of new technologies. This fairly conservative attitude is contrasted with that of other religious groups in Taiwan that have embraced "digital religion" more enthusiastically.

**Shi-Yu Su (Leipzig University)** – *Religious Text Production and Identity Formation in the Digital Age: Three Schismatic Sects of the "Elder Snow School"*

Founded by Li Bingnan (1891–1986) in 1951, the Taichung Buddhist Lotus Society (TBLS) emerged as one of Taiwan's leading lay Buddhist organizations before the rise of Humanistic Buddhism in the late 1980s. Through Confucian-Buddhist practice and continuous text production, Li shaped a distinct identity among followers known as "Lotus Friends." After his death in 1986, TBLS fractured into competing sects, including three main sects- TBLS/Lotus Sect,

the Snow Heart Cultural and Educational Foundation (SHF)/Snow Sect, and the Unlimited Lights Chinese Culture Academy (ULA)/Lamp Sect, each claiming to uphold the orthodoxy of the "Elder Snow School" (ESS, "Elder Snow" is an honorific of Li Bingnan). These sects continue producing texts to reinforce identity and legitimacy, and in the digital era they have expanded into digital publications and online platforms. This study examines how text production shapes sectarian identity by identifying shared ESS texts, analyzing differences among the three sects, and tracing how early ESS editions from the 1950s to 1980s were later re-edited, rewritten, or newly created after the schism. It further investigates the digital strategies adopted by each sect. In addition, based on participant observation, interviews, and analysis of activities, this study elucidates how text production and teaching operate in practice. Focusing on text production from print to digital media, it explains how these sects preserve tradition, innovate, and maintain relevance in Taiwan's competitive religious landscape.

[592] Antonio Leggieri (Università degli Studi di Enna "Kore"). *Configurations of Humor in Imperial China: Case Studies from Song to Ming.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines different uses of humor across a wide spectrum of Chinese literary and performance traditions, and moving from Song anecdotal writing to Yuan zaju drama, early Southern plays, and the Ming novel Jinpingmei, the papers collectively show how wit, satire, comic personae, and joke-telling each illuminate the social dynamics, moral values, and aesthetic strategies of their respective periods.

The first paper demonstrates how biji anecdotes authored by Song-era Buddhist monks deploy wit and verbal dexterity to navigate fraught encounters with Confucian officials, in tense moments of social confrontation. The second paper turns to Yuan zaju to explore the comedic effects of jiānbàn (doubled parts), showing how the simultaneous performance (by the same singing role) of characters from different social strata produces laughter. The third paper analyzes the Southern play Shagouji (To Kill a Dog), whose exaggerated moral rectitude and unruly comic roles destabilize conventional boundaries between the serious and the humorous; she argues that the very excesses for which critics disparaged the play enabled its survival and continual reinvention. The last paper investigates the "canned" jokes of Jinpingmei, tracing their ties to contemporary jestbooks and proposing the category of "functional canned jokes" to account for how these seemingly self-contained units enhance rather than disrupt narrative flow.

The panel foregrounds how Chinese authors and performers across genres and centuries have mobilized laughter to engage with the complexities of their social worlds

**Keywords:** Humor, Biji, Zaju, Nanxi, Shagouji, Jinpingmei

**Xiao Rao (University of California)** – *Wit and Satire in Social Confrontations between Confucian Scholar-officials and Buddhist Monks*

This paper examines anecdotes selected from Song-dynasty biji collections, mostly authored by Buddhist monks, which highlight moments of wit and satire in their social interactions with scholar-officials, at court or in local settings. Although the Song period is often regarded as a time of Confucian ideological revival, Buddhists developed syncretic approaches to philosophical issues that in part influenced various intellectual currents among Confucian scholars. This broader historical narrative, drawn from formal sources such as official histories and biographies, reflects a general reconciliation between Buddhist and Confucian communities. In contrast, the stories recorded in biji present unusual and intriguing moments of social confrontation. In this paper, I demonstrate that underneath this cultural assimilation lies a social world fraught with risk, and how monks navigated power imbalances through shrewdness and witty manipulation of language or rhetoric. These anecdotal records, in turn, provide inspirations for lay literati and storytellers for humor literature.

**Karin Myhre (University of Georgia)** – *Playing class for laughs: the comedic effect of doubled parts in zaju dramas from the Yuan corpus*

As mixed register vernacular forms, such as lyric, song, and drama developed through the Song and Yuan, a broadening compass of character types took center stage. The playwright Guan Hanqing (1241-1320) is known for writing complex female leads that employ a wide emotional and vocal range and navigate moral dilemmas in unexpected ways (Sieber, 2022). But though middle period authors and audiences of vernacular works extended well past a small circle of literati elites, for the most part the lives and experiences of lower class characters were written by those better placed. So the question arises: To what extent does viewpoint constrain literary representation? By what means could playwrights and poets taking women, merchants, and beggars as their subjects, pull aside the curtain, and to give depth and color to the experiences of non-elites? A feature of Chinese song dramas found in some zaju plays allows the main singing role to perform multiple parts across different acts. In a few cases the same player will play characters of disparate social status, thus providing contrasting

characterizations within the same role type. But the workings of jiānbàn (doubled parts) in the late 13th century author Yue Bochuan's "Lü Dongbin Delivers Iron Crutch Li" and "Boundless Heaven Pagoda; Meng Liang Steals the Bones" attributed to Zhu Kai (14th c.), two plays that might be expected to provide some insight about disparate life experiences are instead played for laughs, with lower class characters either clowning, or serving as the butt of others' jokes.

**Regina Llamas González de Amezúa (IE University)** – *Morality and Humor in To Kill a Dog*

The play To Kill a Dog is one of a group of four early Chinese plays known as the Four Great Southern Dramas: Thorn Hairpin, White Rabbit, Moon Prayer Pavilion, and To Kill a Dog. These plays underpin southern theater's dramatic foundations. The first three of them, together with the canonical work in this tradition, The Story of the Lute, were often mentioned in dramatic criticism, praised, performed, imitated, reprinted and anthologized. The one exception is To Kill A Dog which was rarely anthologized. On the contrary, it was fiercely criticized for the superficiality of its language, the clumsiness of its plot, and its excessive and sickening morality. And yet, the play has survived overtime as one of the early southern dramatic masterworks, often emended by a scholarly pen—including Feng Menglong's, whose version is the only extant one—its southern music style respected, the framework of the story retained and its stage presence alive. While most Chinese early plays strive to find a balance between serious and comic scenes, in this play, these two types of scenes are exaggerated to a point where their distinction becomes blurred. This paper will explore how the excessive morality of the three virtuous characters (main female role, secondary female and male roles) is balanced by the surfeit of mischievous humor of the two main comic roles (jing and chou). Yet, while excess of humor serves to amplify the absurdity and crassness of the two comic characters, the play's exaggerated morality—intended to instruct the audience in proper conduct—verges, by its very excess, on the absurdity of virtuous performance.This excess, whether of rectitude and of knavery, excited rejection but paradoxically, also allowed the play to survive.

**Antonio Leggieri (Kore University of Enna)** – *Jokes and their contexts in Jinpingmei*

One of the features that set Jinpingmei apart from the other Ming masterworks is the presence of "canned" jokes. To name only the two best-known versions, twelve self-contained jokes appear in the earlier Cihua recension (1610s), whereas the one from 1695 commented by Zhang Zhupo (1670-1698) contains seventeen of them. In the former recension, primary and secondary characters are evenly represented as joke-tellers, whereas in the latter, Ying Bojue, one of Ximen Qing's hangers-on, emerges as main jester, and showcases his joke-telling abilities in more than one occasion. In both versions the jokes are mostly concentrated in the first half of the text. This paper has a twofold aim: On the one hand it aims to explore another fil rouge that connects Jinpingmei with oral literature, by comparing some of the jokes in this novel with the same jokes recorded in coeval jestbooks; in so doing, it sheds some light on how these jokes would have transformed in the passage from written text to oral performance. On the other hand, it points out the function of canned jokes; in so doing, it brings forth the concept of "functional canned jokes" which serve as enhancers rather than disruptors of the main narrative flow.

[593] Chung-Wei Yang (Academia Sinica Taipei), Nellie Yang (Yale University) and Xinmeng Guo (Columbia University). *Gambling as Interface: Currency, Value, and Social Mobility in Early Modern China.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines the volatile dynamics of value, capital, and social mobility in seventeenthand eighteenth-century China through the lens of gambling. This period was marked by significant shifts in credit expansion, commercial circulation, and changing patterns of social mobility. As an intensified arena of speculation and exchange, gambling made visible the mutable boundaries that shaped how people navigated material stakes, social claims, and economic uncertainty. The panel demonstrates that gambling served not merely as a social practice but as a conceptual model through which late imperial China confronted emerging regimes of value and risk. Treating gambling as an interface, it brings together literary analysis with close readings of legislative, fiscal, and communal debates to illuminate how evolving notions of value were defined, contested, and narrativized. Nellie Ting Yang's paper demonstrates how legal officials struggled to enforce anti-gambling laws, as mundane objects were repeatedly repurposed for speculative uses, revealing the state's difficulty in stabilizing its own financial instruments. Chung-Wei Yang introduces the concept of "fictive value"—anticipated or deferred assets treated as already possessed—and examines how seventeenth-century credit regimes and gambling practices embodied a broader shift toward speculative, non-substantive wealth that confounded those unable to navigate its logic. Xinmeng Guo investigates the card game madiao, saturated with the language of economic transactions and bandit warfare, as both metaphor and mechanism for the continual reshuffling of economic and social capital, highlighting the anxiety, violence, and disorientation accompanying the rise of the nouveau riche. Ariel Fox, whose work explores the interplay between literary and economic imaginaries in late imperial China, will serve as

discussant. Her research on seventeenth-century theater, commercial culture, and the aesthetics of money offers a fitting lens for connecting the approaches represented across the papers.
**Keywords:** Anti-Gambling Legislation, Fictive Value, Madiao and Social Capital, Speculation and Risk, Late Imperial Value Regimes

**Nellie Yang (Yale University)** – *Negotiating Monetary Risk and the Categorical Collapse of Qing Gambling Prohibitions*
This paper explores the legal and practical challenges of defining and enforcing anti-gambling laws during the Ming and Qing dynasties in China, focusing on the difficulty in distinguishing legitimate currency and harmless playthings from illicit gambling implements. The source details how Qing legal officials attempted to outlaw specific items like dice and playing cards to curb gambling, yet struggled when confronted with commonly used objects like dominoes and especially coins, which served both as legal tender and easily adaptable gambling tools. This ambiguity led to complex debates, such as the exchange between official Zhang Can, who tried to elevate the coin's status as a "national treasure" to prohibit its use in the gambling activity dieqian, and Emperor Yongzheng, who emphasized the coin's unavoidable use in everyday life. Furthermore, the discussion extends to coin catalogs and historical practices, showing the fluid boundary between official currency, game tokens, and collectible objects, underscoring how players continually improvised to evade legal restrictions by substituting new materials and tokens for money. Ultimately, the law's insistence on classifying objects by exclusive function failed because value was perpetually in motion. The legal system was forced to reckon with the fact that mundane objects, like coins, could be appropriated for play and speculation, exposing the fragility of the imperial state's capacity to fix the meaning of its own financial instruments.
**Chung-Wei Yang (Academia Sinica Taipei)** – *Wagering What Is Not Mine: Fictive Value and the Credit of Imagination in Li Yu's Fiction of the Seventeenth Century*
This paper analyzes two stories by Li Yu, "The Ghost Loses Money, the Living Repays the Debt" and "Fortune from Misfortune", to examine the concept of "fictive value" and its entanglement with narrative form under the expanding credit system of the seventeenth century. Drawing on the logic of speculative finance, "fictive value" refers to assets that are borrowed, deferred, or merely anticipated yet treated as already possessed, enabling money to generate more money through expectation rather than substance. While earlier scholarship has focused on representations of tangible monetary circulation in late-Ming and early-Qing literature, this paper foregrounds a shifting psychological orientation toward anticipated capital and credit-based speculation. This conceptual shift enables a fresh reading of Li Yu's fiction, where economic speculation is not merely depicted but structurally enacted through narrative form. "The Ghost Loses Money" presents gambling as a microcosm of the credit economy. Rather than offering a moralizing tale about degeneration through gambling, the story dramatizes the confusion and vulnerability of individuals who lack the capacity to navigate fictive value and become unwitting victims of a system they neither recognize nor understand. "Fortune from Misfortune", centered on re-lending and maritime trade, illustrates how temporal deferrals inherent in credit shape economic logic as well as narrative rhythm and causality. By reframing karmic retribution as an allegory of credit relations, Li Yu not only reveals how individuals, institutions, and stories alike are entangled in the crises and temptations of a world sustained by fictive value, but also stages a literary interrogation of the epistemological and ethical foundations of credit itself.
**Xinmeng Guo (Columbia University)** – *Cards on the Table: Madiao and the Problems of Mobility in Zhaoshi bei (The Cup that Reflects the World)*
This paper considers the question of economic and social mobility in seventeenth-century China through a reading of the short story "The Miser Makes a Fortune from New Pits" in Zhaoshi bei, penned by a pseudonymous author in the 1660s—a moment when the expanding power of capital permeates all aspects of social life. Reflecting on this comic account of a peasant family's seemingly accidental rise in wealth and status, I read the story as a commentary on the disorienting social landscape and the combative energies characteristic of the era.
The story narrates the economic venture and social ascent of a rural family across two generations: a father amasses a fortune by collecting night soil and his son, initially indulged in gambling, eventually passes the yuanshi examination. The gambling game in question is madiao, a widely popular card game among Jiangnan elites during the late Ming. Featuring figures from the novel Outlaws of the Marsh, madiao is saturated with the language of economic transactions and bandit warfare. Reading the story alongside contemporary accounts and discourses surrounding madiao, I contend that the colorfully portrayed gambling game not only enacts but also embodies the relentless reshuffling of economic and social capital. More importantly, madiao's distinctive design and cultural prevalence allow the story to probe some key dimensions of late Ming mobility—particularly anxiety and

competition, anger and violence, and the uneasy erasure of family past in the meteoric rise of the nouveau riche.

[598] Yichuan Guo (Politecnico di Milano). *Reorienting Publicness through Commoning and Care: A Socio-Spatial Model for Community Building in China's Urban Housing.*

**Abstract.** China's housing development is shifting from large-scale commercial construction toward affordable rental housing and micro-regeneration initiatives. Within this transition, community building has become a central goal in state policy and planning discourse, where publicness is frequently invoked as a normative ideal. Yet this official language of publicness is often deployed in procedural or formalistic ways, limiting its transformative potential in architectural and urban practices, while also obscuring its social meaning in everyday residential life.

This paper interrogates the contemporary uses of publicness in China's housing context and argues that its prevailing understanding requires reorientation. By placing Chinese discourses in dialogue with Western theoretical concerns about publicness, commoning and care, the paper identifies conceptual gaps and possibilities for reinterpretation. Acknowledging China's distinct socio-political structure, the paper selectively engages with these concepts: it moves beyond the dominant top-down interpretation of publicness, while avoiding uncritical adoption of Western commons discourse. Instead, it develops a socio-spatial model that integrates these ideas on different levels and reframes community building as a multi-layered process involving: publicly developed and collectively oriented physical environments, commoning practices that shape social relations, and care ethics that address everyday interdependence.

The model is then illustrated through selected contemporary housing cases in urban China, demonstrating its potential to rethink community formation and to offer new insights into housing practices as both a spatial and social project.

**Keywords:** China's urban housing, community building, publicness, commoning, care ethics, socio-spatial practices

[602] Kevin Bockholt (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg), Yuning Teng (Freie Universität Berlin) and Bernd Spyra (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg). *Uncovering the Hidden in Images - Re-examining Modern Chinese History through Visual Cultural Studies.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines how diverse visual media (such as photographs, prints, and drawings) provide new perspectives that enrich or challenge established historical narratives. It advocates for interdisciplinary methodologies that integrate these materials, frequently overlooked in traditional historiography, into the study of modern Chinese history.

To illustrate these aims, the panel presents three case studies. The first paper investigates photographs of WWI published in Chinese newspapers, showing how visual reportage introduced global events to a domestic audience and mediated perceptions of the outside world. The second paper analyzes how the image of Otto von Bismarck was crafted by Chinese artists through drawings to present him as a national hero, serving both as political propaganda and as a tool of moral instruction to strengthen Chinese national identity. The third paper examines how the presentation of Chinese prints collected by Academia Sinica and Hamburg's ethnological museum in the 1930s shaped perceptions of Chinese tradition and modernity in a transnational context.

Together, these papers reveal how images were used to mediate encounters with the wider world, construct narratives of national identity, and promote visions of cultural authenticity. By tracing their transnational circulation, selective framing, and the political and cultural meanings ascribed to them, the three case studies demonstrate that visual materials play a crucial role in producing historical knowledge. Ultimately, this panel calls for a historiography that recognizes the interpretive power of visual evidence, acknowledging that seeing, interpreting, and displaying images has shaped historical understanding as profoundly as written texts.

**Keywords:** Visual studies, modern Chinese history, transnational circulation, interdisciplinary methodologies

**Kevin Bockholt (Ruhr University Bochum)** – *Seeing the War from Afar: Photographic Representations of the First World War in China, 1914–1918*

This paper investigates an aspect of the First World War's reception in China that has so far received little attention: the visual dimension of wartime reporting. Existing scholarship has demonstrated that the extensive coverage of the war in the Chinese press, with telegrams from around the globe continuously updating the conflict, provided Chinese audiences with an initial understanding of modern warfare and the evolving global order. This paper moves beyond textual reception and examines the functions that images assumed within wartime reportage and the ways in which they complemented, complicated, or expanded textual narratives. Drawing on examples of war photographs that circulated in newspapers, journals, and pictorials in China between 1914 and 1918, the paper analyzes the themes selected for photographic representation—such as battlefields, soldiers, and military

technology—and explores the intended messages conveyed through these images. It argues that Chinese journalists regarded photographs as a means of enabling readers to visually "experience" distant battlefields, providing an intermediated sense of "truth" amid often biased telegraphic news, and illustrating both military developments and the broader social consequences of the conflict. By focusing on wartime photographs, the study sheds new light on the emergence of visual practices in Chinese foreign reporting, on the shaping of Chinese visual perceptions of Europe during the conflict, and on efforts to reconstruct the global dimensions of the First World War.

**Yuning Teng (Freie Universität Berlin)** – *Re-fabricating Bismarck: Visual Glocalization as Reflected in Nation-Building in Early 20th-Century China*

This paper examines the appropriation and reinterpretation of Otto von Bismarck's image in early twentieth-century Chinese visual media, focusing on how this figure of foreign authority was "re-fabricated" (after Peter Burke) as a symbol of Chinese nationalism within the local sociopolitical context. By examining portraits, biographical illustrations, and visual representations of Bismarck monuments in Germany produced and circulated by Chinese publishers from the late Qing to the early Republican era, this study analyzes both the selection of these visual sources and the strategies used by local artists to recontextualize Bismarck's persona for domestic audiences. Through political iconography and visual-textual analysis, this paper demonstrates that Chinese illustrators adapted Western imagery by employing traditional Chinese pictorial styles to integrate Bismarck into narratives of authority, virtue, and national strength. This process illustrates how images, as "Bilderfahrzeuge" (image vehicles, after Aby Warburg), travel across time and cultures, often involving creative misunderstandings, selective appropriation, and recoding to suit local aesthetic and political needs. By emphasizing the interplay between visual media, politics, and cultural translation, this paper demonstrates that image-mediated knowledge offers a new perspective on nation-building and identity formation in early twentieth-century China through the lens of "glocalization." In addressing the local adaptation of visual imagery, this study also engages with current international debates on "difficult heritage" and the reinterpretation of historical icons in global memory politics.

**Bernd Spyra (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)** – *Hidden Modernities: Industrial Techniques and the Reception of Chinese Popular Prints in an Ethnological Collection*

In the ethnological collection paradigm of the early twentieth century, societies were visualized through material objects. Material form stood in for social form: artifacts were expected to embody a culture's essence, authenticity, and tradition. This paper examines how such visualizing practices shaped the reception of Chinese popular prints collected through the cooperation between the Academia Sinica in Nanjing and the Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg (today MARKK) around 1930. Although long described as hand-crafted block prints, many New Year pictures(nianhua) were in fact industrially produced by Shanghai's modern print industry as offset lithographs with mechanized colour separation and serial formats. Yet these technical features were concealed by the ethnological logic of collection and display, which rendered industrial modernity illegible within the framework of "folk art." By analysing individual prints alongside acquisition records and object lists, the paper explores how ethnological modes of visualization stabilized a particular image of "China" as timeless and artisanal. It contrasts this European reception with contemporary Chinese debates and campaigns of cultural reform in the Republican period, which actively utilized industrial image media, revealing how both contexts negotiated the visibility of modernity through competing ideas of tradition. Ultimately, the study argues that the MARKK prints illuminate not only the transnational circulation of images but also the epistemic operations of ethnology itself: how the museum's visual order made certain forms of modernity visible as cultural identity while rendering others deliberately unseen.

[603] Heidi Huang (The Chinese University of Hong Kong), Lidan Hu (Sichuan University), Meng Li (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University) and Henry Kit Fung Chiu (Lingnan University, Hong Kong). *Negotiating Womanhood: Agency, Narrative, and Social Scripts in Chinese Media.*

**Abstract.** This collection of studies examines the representation and narrative about women's lives across modern Chinese media, from pre-war cinema to contemporary digital platforms. Despite spanning different historical periods and genres, these works collectively investigate how female identity is constructed in negotiation with, and often in resistance to, the dominant social, patriarchal, and political forces. The analyses reveal a consistent tension between restrictive cultural scripts and women's pursuit of agency. Key themes include everyday aesthetics in women's life writing, the reimagination of aging as a space for renewed autonomy and desire, the commodification of intergenerational female conflict within platform capitalism, and the historical mobilization of female archetypes for political propaganda. Together, these works demonstrate how various media, from life writing and auteur cinema to short-form video, serve as crucial arenas where narratives of womanhood are contested. They highlight

the ongoing struggle to articulate female subjectivity, intimacy, and solidarity against a backdrop of persistent patriarchal constraints, generational tensions, and evolving socio-economic pressures in China.
**Keywords:** Female character, Aging, Patriarchal kinship structures, Life writing, Chinese cinema

**Heidi Huang (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)** – *Aestheticization of Transience: Chinese Life Writings about "Middle-age girls"*
Abstract: Life writing refers to a literary genre that includes different kinds of works centered on personal experiences, memories, and reflections—such as memoirs, autobiographies, diaries, and letters. In light of Yuriko Saito's discussion about "aestheticization of transience", this presentation examines an emergent genre of "Middle-Aged Girl" life writings in the contemporary Chinese literary landscape. It argues that such writings, no matter fictional or non-fictional, not only construe affective femininities but showcase female writers' "reaction to the aging process" and their "existential struggles to determine to what extent we should relinquish human control over nature's working" (Saito 2007,7). The popularity of women's life writing demonstrates the increasing need for everyday aesthetics via therapeutic narrative that exemplifies both intergenerational dialogues and gender awareness in China.
**Lidan Hu (Sichuan University)** – *Reimaging Modern Women in China: Gender, Intimacy and Aging in Shao Yihui's Feminist Comedies*
Abstract: In a Chinese cinematic environment largely characterized by youth and male-centered narratives, Shao Yihui's films, B for Busy (2021) and Her Story (2024), present a significant feminist reimagining of aging, desire, and female subjectivity. This study examines how both films center women over thirty—including those who are divorced, widowed, or single mothers—as they successfully negotiate intimacy, selfhood, and care outside the conventional, restrictive roles, thereby actively unsettling dominant cultural scripts concerning the "mature woman" in contemporary Chinese society. Set in the dynamic urban context of Shanghai, Shao's work offers nuanced portrayals of aging not as a decline into marginalization, but as a space for renewed agency, sexual autonomy, and intergenerational solidarity. This article argues that Shao constructs a "mature female gaze" that fundamentally redefines representations of desire, maturity, and gender roles beyond typical youthful beauty tropes. Through the strategic use of slow pacing, domestic soundscapes, and emotionally textured dialogue, her films portray older women's desires as vital, complex, and socially disruptive, rather than merely tragic or comic. This analysis explores how Shao Yihui reframes the temporal and emotional registers of womanhood in contemporary Chinese cinema, ultimately offering new possibilities for imagining aging beyond patriarchal or neoliberal constraints.
**Meng Li (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University)** – *Understanding Mother-in-Law vs. Daughter-in-Law Antagonism in Chinese New Media Narratives in the Lens of Cultural Studies*
Abstract: On Chinese new media platforms Douyin and Kuaishou, short video clips or livestreaming shows depicting explosive confrontations between pópo (mothers-in-law) and bǎomā (young stay-at-home mothers) have become a distinct micro-genre that garners billions of views and drives lucrative maternal-influencer economies. This paper interrogates how such antagonistic performances are scripted, circulated and commodified within China's new-media ecology. Combining digital ethnography, narrative analysis with leading bǎomā creators on Douyin and Kuaishou, I argue that platform algorithms reward extreme affect—public humiliation, tearful exits, table-flipping—by translating family tension into monetizable traffic. The repetitive iconography of the pópo as tyrant and the bǎomā as virtuous victim reactivates kinship scripts of Confucian tradition while simultaneously erasing structural patriarchy by individualizing blame on "evil mothers-in-law." These works, even though cultivating gendered solidarity among viewers, invite voyeuristic shaming that re-inscribes generational scapegoating. Crucially, antagonistic mother-in-law/daughter-in-law content functions as a cultural technology for platform capitalism: it lowers production costs (domestic settings, amateur actors), lengthens watch time through serial conflict, and channels e-commerce sales of baby and household products. The paper reveals how post-reform familial anxieties—housing scarcity, care-work burdens, and declining fertility—are re-narrated as personal grudges, thereby displacing collective solutions with individualized, consumable drama.
**Henry Kit Fung Chiu (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)** – *Spy, Fallen Woman, and Country Girl: Female Characters in Prewar Hong Kong Cinema*
Abstract: The early 20th century was an era in which Chinese cinema was dominated by women's stories. In particular, when leftist cinema rose to prominence in the 1930s, narratives about women—including tales of modern women and fallen women struggling in modern time and wartime—became central to the male-led film industry. After the fall of Shanghai in 1937, Hong Kong became a production hub for Chinese-language cinema,

where different factions, conflicting voices, and diverse cinematic styles gathered in the then British colony. Drawing on two Hong Kong film—The Light of Women 女性之光 (1937) and Song of Retribution 正氣歌 (1941), this paper sheds light on the representation of female characters in Cantonese-language cinema produced in Hong Kong between 1937 and 1941, and illuminates the changing representations shaped by the sociopolitical context in the city. How stories centered on women became a central theme of propaganda films? And how did the cinematic image of women change in Hong Kong? This paper addresses the questions by examining the evolution of women's depictions—from mainland to colonial Hong Kong, and from fallen women to antiwar heroines—amid various political pressures both from the mainland and the colony.

[606] Igor Sevenard (University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany), Konrad Böhm (University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany), Martyna Szoja (University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany) and Arne Meyer (University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany). *Chinese Futures of World Order: Normative Visions, Security Regimes, and Space Leadership.*

**Abstract.** This panel investigates how China envisions, negotiates, and enacts possible futures of the international order by examining its engagement across the domains of normative world-order concepts, security institutions, and outer space governance. Departing from views that cast China simply as a status quo power or revisionist challenger, it explores the ambivalences, tensions, and forward-looking strategies that shape Chinese participation in global governance. The panel situates itself within emerging academic debates that focus on the temporal dimension of world politics: how the future is anticipated, contested, and performed by state and non-state actors. In particular, it highlights China's dual role as both a promoter of new, often utopian global projects and as a pragmatic actor operating within established international frameworks. By integrating multiple disciplines, ranging from International Relations theory to science-and-technology studies and security studies, the panel provides a comparative perspective on Chinese future-making practices. The contributions analyze, for example, how Chinese visions of world order are articulated and performed in multilateral settings, how elite academic discourses construct and legitimize imagined global futures, how security apparatuses such as the nuclear non-proliferation regime are managed to enhance China's claim to credibility and leadership, and how space exploration initiatives demonstrate Beijing's ambition to create new pathways for global cooperation, especially with actors from the Global South. The panel thus illuminates the ways in which Chinese approaches to authority, legitimacy, and leadership are closely intertwined with distinctive practices of narrating and enacting the future. Through this multifaceted inquiry, the panel aims to offer new conceptual lenses for understanding the significance of futures in Chinese foreign policy and to advance the study of China's role in shaping contemporary global order. It speaks to current debates about normative power, international security, and technological leadership, emphasizing the analytic and heuristic value of studying Chinese "futures" in contemporary Chinese Studies.

**Keywords:** Chinese Futures, World Order, Global Governance, International Security, Outer Space Governance

**Igor Sevenard (University of Duisburg-Essen)** – *Superposed Futures: Performing Success and Failure in China's Global Community of Shared Future*

China's vision for a Global Community of Shared Future (GCSF) exists in a state of paradox, appearing simultaneously to be gaining traction and failing to launch. This article posits that the GCSF's success and failure are not future outcomes to be determined, but coexisting 'present futures' being actively performed by political actors in the now. The concept of 'superposition,' derived from physics, is introduced as a discursive analogy to describe this coexistence of mutually incompatible expectations. A qualitative analysis of key Chinese official texts, leadership speeches, and multilateral documents from 2013-2025 reveals how these rival futures are enacted. Chinese state discourse performs success by compressing time, escalating modality ('shall,' 'must'), and anchoring the GCSF to established doctrines and initiatives like the BRI, thereby constructing it as an already unfolding reality. In parallel, international responses perform failure through the diplomatic strategies of omission, dilution, and translation politics in multilateral forums, effectively constraining the initiative's normative diffusion. Ultimately, this article offers a temporally explicit account of Chinese norm entrepreneurship as a contest of expectation management, providing a portable framework for analyzing how world-order projects live in multiple temporalities at once.

**Konrad Böhm (University of Duisburg-Essen)** – *Visions of Future and World Order in Chinese Schools of International Relations*

This paper compares visions of the future international order across distinct "Chinese Schools" of International Relations (IR). It investigates how future orientation shapes interpretations of the present and past, and vice versa.

The paper offers insights into Chinese elite thinking about the international order and enhances theoretical models for studying the social role of the future. The research analyzes shared and divergent temporal narratives among scholars of Moral Realism, Tianxia systems theory, and relational approaches to global order. employing quantitative and qualitative text analysis, it compares academic publications and public statements across three dimensions: (1) critiques of the current global order, (2) invocations of Chinese historical experience and philosophical concepts, and (3) visions of a desired future international order. Anchored in debates on political mythology and political ideology, the paper frames Chinese IR schools as illustrative cases of the broader mechanisms through which future-oriented narratives reconstruct history and contemporary politics.
Findings indicate that these scholarly communities advance distinct and internally varied future imaginaries, underscoring the heterogeneity of elite Chinese discourse and the negotiated nature of future-oriented aspirations.
**Martyna Szoja (University of Duisburg-Essen)** – *China's Nuclear Non-Proliferation Apparatus: Current and Future Directions*
China positions itself to play a constructive leadership role in sustaining and reforming the highly contested non-proliferation regime. Its nuclear non-proliferation apparatus has become increasingly vocal and influential. Yet China's impact remains ambiguous due to internal contradictions between its strategic ambitions and declared support. Such a dualistic posture may, in the future, generate uncertainty for global nuclear governance. Analysis of China's non-proliferation structures, particularly within the MoFA, complemented by a review of official submissions to the UN and speeches delivered by Chinese representatives, offers an objective perspective on the effectiveness of China's declarations. This study examines China's participation in multilateral forums, its adoption of confidence-building and risk-reduction measures, and its promotion of initiatives such as No First Use and proposals for future-oriented frameworks. Particular attention is given to how China articulates its role, presents its identity as a responsible major power, and seeks to shape norms within institutions associated with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This article contributes to scholarship by providing one of the first systematic assessments of China's institutional capacity and strategic intent within the global non-proliferation regime. It clarifies whether China functions as a normative supporter, selective adaptor, or emerging leader in non-proliferation efforts. The analysis shows that China's apparatus has become increasingly assertive and professionalized, marked by expanded diplomatic activity, deeper engagement in negotiations, and occasional steps toward transparency. However ongoing nuclear modernization, limited openness, and uneven commitment to verification continue to cast doubt on China's overall credibility.
**Arne Meyer (University of Duisburg-Essen)** – *Chinese Futures of World Order: Normative Visions, Security Regimes, and Space Leadership*
China's manned spaceflight program has emerged as a key instrument of its outer space leadership pursuit. The paper argues that China frames itself as an alternative to established space manned programs (e.g. ISS), especially for Global South countries, to act as a "responsible major space power" and technological global leader. This role claim and the current role performance are discussed through the lens of a role theory approach. A core contribution of this paper is the application of a leadership role analysis on still developing Chinese outer space programs with limited amount of international cooperation. For this purpose, the example of the domestically build Tiangong-3 Space Station is chosen to determine how China promotes an inclusive approach on outer space cooperation to contest the current western dominated access to manned spaceflight. Drawing on policy documents, mission data, and diplomatic statements, and the current debate between western and Chinese experts, this paper examines the role claim and role performance according to Harnisch's four leadership auxiliary roles (pioneer, agenda-setter, representative, and mediator). Building on these findings, the paper provides a detailed explanation of Chinese-led manned spaceflight, the utilization of cooperation to solidify a leadership role claim and an outlook on how China is planning to shape and lead the future of outer space exploration. Preliminary findings show that manned spaceflight cooperation is currently still limited to a single Chinese-Pakistani joint mission. The year 2030 is identified as a future turning point, due to the predicted deorbiting of ISS.

[607] Yile Hu (the University of Hong Kong/ Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient - EFEO-Paris). *Secular Spectacles in Sacred Spaces: Music, Dance, and Acrobatics Performance in Chinese Buddhist Art.*
**Abstract.** This paper examines secular performance iconography within Chinese Buddhist art—specifically, depictions of performers in non-religious attire situated in mundane contexts and devoid of divine attributes. Centering on the Dunhuang cave while incorporating visual evidence from Gongyi, Maiji Mountain, and Longmen cave sites, alongside historical documentation and Dunhuang manuscripts, this study employs integrated methodologies drawn from Buddhist archaeology, music archaeology, and textual scholarship. The visual contexts

in which images of music, dance, and acrobatic performances appear can be categorised into the following three types: the procession scene, the sutra painting, and the ornamental motifs. Analysis reveals that these images embody profound cultural synthesis among the Central Plains, Western Regions, and Tibetan civilisations, manifested through instrument typologies, acrobatic repertoires, and costume conventions. Moreover, secular performance iconography carries substantial Buddhist doctrinal significance, demonstrating intimate connections with scriptures such as the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, and the Vimalakīrti Sūtra. Meanwhile, these visual representations also served as meritorious offerings, objects of devotional worship, and conspicuous displays signifying donor status and piety. To sum up, this research illuminates the relationship between the secular and the sacred in Buddhist visual culture, demonstrating how mundane entertainment became integrated into religious contexts within the divine framework of Chinese Buddhism.
**Keywords:** Buddhist Art, Dunhuang Cave, Secular Performance, Music, Dance, Acrobatics

[608] Huilin Chang (Hong Kong Chu Hai College), Yifan Li (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich), Ziqi Xuan (the University of Hong Kong) and Ye Yuan (École Pratique des Hautes Études / University of Leipzig).
*Reconfiguring the Sacred: Materiality and Marginality in Chinese Religious Narratives and Practices.*
**Abstract.** This panel examines how sacred narratives and ritual forms have been reproduced, reinterpreted, and localized from early medieval to modern China. Drawing on history, anthropology, and religious studies, it considers the interplay of materiality, morality, and authority that shapes religious practice and storytelling. Rather than treating these as static expressions of "religion" in an institutional sense, it asks how diverse modes of narration and performance articulate multiple dimensions of faith, morality, and belonging.
The first paper reconsiders the cult of Lady Xian through historiography, revealing how marginal narratives shaped authority in Southern Dynasties, and how early Tang accounts of frontier figures expose the tension between local and imperial discourse.
The second traces the transformation of three Buddhist savior figures from their Indian origins to their Chinese reinterpretations. It argues that their evolving roles reflect a redistribution of salvific authority and a conceptual reconfiguration that integrated Buddhist compassion with Confucian morality.
The third examines the reconstruction of Mount Tai's sacred narrative in early Republican China. By analyzing political proposals, inscriptions, travel writings, and reformist essays, the paper demonstrates how material sites and ritual landscapes become arenas for negotiating moral authority and collective identity.
The fourth examines the materiality in ancestor worship with an ethnography in the Ding family during the Ghost Festival in Ningxiang. It highlights how ritual objects mediate and reconcile the diverse interpretations embedded in the ritual process.
Together, these studies show how Chinese religious and moral worlds are continually reconstituted through narrative form, ritual media, and lived experience.
**Keywords:** religion, Chinese studies, history, sociology

**Huilin Chang (Hong Kong Chu Hai College)** – *Marginal Narratives and Hagiography in Early Medieval China: Lady Xian*
The cult of Lady Xian originated during the Southern Dynasties and has endured for more than fourteen centuries. Through the interaction between local traditions and state ritual institutions, it forged enduring connections between Lingnan society and the central court. As a non-Han female local chief, Lady Xian exercised real political authority in a frontier region for over half a century. This paper focuses on the formation of her cult during the Liang (502–557), Chen (557–589), and Sui dynasties (581–619), examining how the deification of historical figures was shaped by their specific sociocultural and political environments. From a historiographical perspective, it explores the paradox of Lady Xian being placed in the Lienü Zhuan (Biographies of Women) despite her role as a local ruler, and contrasts her portrayal with contemporary records of southern rebellions. By doing so, it reveals the overlooked interactions among southern ethnic groups and the tensions between gender, marginal narratives, and state authority.
Extending the analysis to the broader early medieval period, the paper studies the sanctification and ritual commemoration of frontier figures in ethnically mixed regions, situating these narratives within the early Tang historiographical context. Against the backdrop of southern frontier development and imperial integration, early Tang rulers and historians sought to retrospectively systematize the cult of human spirits and to reinterpret the legacies of the Southern and Northern Dynasties—thereby articulating a historiographical logic rooted in the experience of division and the pursuit of reunification.

**Yifan Li (University of Munich)** – *Compassion Recast: The Evolution of Buddhist Savior Figures in Medieval China*
The image of the Buddhist savior underwent a remarkable transformation as Buddhism took root in medieval China. Early Indian sources such as the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra envision Avalokiteśvara as an omnipotent universal savior who traverses hell, the realm of hungry ghosts, and the heavens to rescue sentient beings. Yet, as Buddhism became localized in China, this universal salvific role underwent significant reconfiguration. By the tenth century, Avalokiteśvara was feminized and reimagined as a compassionate protector concerned primarily with worldly suffering, while the authority over hell and postmortem salvation was transferred to Kṣitigarbha. The Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Pūrvapraṇidhāna Sūtra not only redefined the moral and bureaucratic order of the underworld but also displaced Avalokiteśvara as the principal redeemer of the infernal realms. Parallel to this shift, the figure of Maudgalyāyana gained increasing prominence through the Ullambana Sūtra and its Chinese reinterpretations, which recast the salvific act as a filial duty. The narrative of rescuing one's mother from the realm of hungry ghosts transformed the cosmic compassion of bodhisattvas into a familial and moralized ideal, integrating Buddhist soteriology with Confucian ethics. By tracing these overlapping and competing narratives across scriptural translations, apocryphal sutras, and liturgical texts from the fifth to the tenth century, this paper argues that medieval Chinese Buddhism redefined salvation through a process of inter-soteriological negotiation. The shifting roles of Avalokiteśvara, Kṣitigarbha, and Maudgalyāyana reveal how the salvific ideal was redistributed, thus reflecting a broader intellectual transformation in the moral cosmology of medieval China.

**Ziqi Xuan (The University of Hong Kong)** – *From Altar to National Mountain: Reconstruction of Mount Tai's Sacred Narrative in Early Republican China*
Mount Tai, one of China's most revered sacred mountains, was long embedded in narratives of cosmological order, political legitimacy, and moral authority. During the imperial era, it served as a ritual centre where emperors performed sacrifices to communicate with Heaven and Earth, anchoring the imperial cosmos. However, the early twentieth century witnessed a profound reconfiguration of Mount Tai's symbolic status. With the emergence of new political imaginaries, Republican intellectuals and officials reframed the mountain not as an exclusive locus of dynastic legitimacy, but as a collective emblem of the modern nation-state. A crucial moment in this transformation was the publication of proposals such as the Proposal to Establish Mount Tai as the National Mountain (Ding Taishan wei Guoshan chuyi 定泰山為國山芻議), which articulated a new narrative framework that situated the sacred peak within cultural, historical, and civic discourses. This paper examines how Mount Tai's narrative identity was re-authored after the Republican period through political debates, ritual trasformation, and textual reinterpretations. By analyzing inscription, travel writings, as well as reformist essays, it traces the mechanisms by which a traditional sacred site was repurposed to embody national heritage, public virtue, and a modern civic imagination. Through this case study, the paper illustrates how sacred narratives can be reconfigured, demonstrating the fluidity with which material sites and ritual landscapes become arenas for negotiating moral authority and collective identity.

**Ye Yuan (EPHE/PSL)** – *Persistence of Form: Materiality in the Ancestral Rites of the Ding Family, Ningxiang County Town, Hunan, 2005–2025*
The Zhongyuan Festival (Ghost Festival), on the fifteenth day of the seventh month according to the lunar calendar, is considered essential in Han Chinese religious tradition. During this festival, family members present offerings and perform certain rituals to their ancestors. The Ding family, who have dwelt in Ningxiang county town for over sixty years, follows the annual tradition in 2025. This year, they should face the declining quality of paper offerings and the lack of a proper divination tool. Without a ritual instructor, the job of which is often taken on by a senior family member, the task becomes more challenging. However, despite the challenges, the Ding family members cooperated in the ritual performance and interpretation of the offerings, ultimately contributing to the festival's accomplishment.
Having been involved in the festival, I conducted my fieldwork among my close family members. This allowed me to record how they commemorated my grandparents and further rethink the rupture and continuity of the ritual. The material aspects of the ritual, for instance, the meal and paper offerings, permit the sensory and behavioral interaction of the participants, including the living and deceased family members. Meanwhile, the materials became the field in which the participants argued and agreed on the meaning of their ritual commitment and the ritual process itself. Therefore, the materiality of the ritual provides an analytical tool for studying the negotiation and reproduction of the meaning of traditional ancestor worship in a changing context.

[609] Zixiong Lin (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg), Zeyu Du (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg), Yuling Shi (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg) and Junyi Yang (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg). *Feeling Together: Affective Politics in Forging Communities in Modern and Contemporary China.*

**Abstract.** How does a community feel? Although scholarship has long acknowledged the social force of affects and emotions, systematic academic focus on their role in forging collective identities in the Chinese context is just a nascent renaissance. Following this trend, this panel brings historical, literary, and sociological perspectives on modern China into dialogue with affect studies. We conceptualize affect as a communicative code generating shared interpretations and structures of feeling through circulation of texts, practices, and interactions, thereby shaping how diverse groups interpret and inhabit social life. By examining both sentimental scripts and their embodied practices, we illuminate the assumptions underpinning shared emotional codes, the formation and coherence of emotional communities, and the responses they elicit from others. Shi Yuling analyzes pre-1911 essays and novellas to show how the figure of the knight-errant (xia) was reconfigured as an affective resource envisaging to mobilize patriotic sentiment across social strata. Lin Zixiong traces the process of the Hunan Peasant Movement under the CCP mobilization as a social event causing an "emotional anarchy" with debates and conflicts among various emotional communities. Du Zeyu examines Tang Junyi's metaphor of huaguo piaoling (The fall and demise of flowers and fruit), to reveal how sorrow, nostalgia, and exile shaped a transnational affective community among Cold War Chinese diasporas. Finally, Yang Junyi investigates contemporary white-collar workers to argue that affective communities emerge not from overt resistance but from the dynamic subtle ways of affective responses within everyday negotiations of work.

**Keywords:** Affect and Emotion, Emotional Communities, Affective Mobilization, Community Formation, Modern and Contemporary China, Diaspora, Peasant, Intellectual, White-Collar Groups

**Yuling Shi (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg)** – *Knight-errant as National Savior? The Reconfiguration of Xia Figure in Pre-1911 Cultural Discourse and Its Sentimental Functions.*

The beginning of the 20th century found China amidst a crumbling Qing empire and growing threats to its national sovereignty posed by foreign powers. In the quest for resources to "save the dying nation and preserve its existence"(jiuwang tucun 救亡图存), patriots and reform-minded intellectuals at the time found much value in the traditionally-rooted figure—knight-errant (xia 侠). Essays, poems and fictional stories promoting the knight-errant spirits or featuring the knight-errant as a heroic martyr or the national savior frequently appeared in the progressive magazines, newspapers, and novels. Why, in this narrative of saving a dying state, was xia frequently employed as the dominant representative of hope and faith, rather than those more established loyalist image such as Yue Fei 岳飞?

This paper intends to investigate this question from two dimensions—the theorization of xia and their representation. Through analyzing the essays of scholars such as Liang Qichao 梁启超， Tan Sitong 谭嗣同 as well as the cultural productions designed for a wider audience such as novellas, this paper argues that the knight-errantry is espoused less as a political program for social reform, but more as a relational and emotional code to bridge the elite and the masses, the tradition and the modern, the domestic and the foreign, with the attempt to build an affective collective that shares a renewed sense of nationalism as well as enthusiasm for revolutionary uprising.

**Zixiong Lin (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg)** – *Emotional Communities and Transformative Mobilization: Reinterpreting the 1926–27 Hunan Peasant Movement*

This paper applies Barbara Rosenwein's theory of emotional communities to reinterpret the dynamics and eventual dissolution of the 1926–27 Hunan peasant movement. Rosenwein defines emotional communities as groups in which people adhere to shared norms of emotional expression and value, or devalue, the same or related emotions. Such communities are marked by porosity, allowing individuals to interpret situations flexibly and move between coexisting emotional communities. This concept provides a lens to see the peasant movement as a contested field where divergent communities interacted, cooperated, and conflicted. The early Chinese Communist Party's class ideology, emphasizing inter-class antagonism and the need to cultivate "the masses" as a fervent force, informed propaganda, collective rituals, and violence for the purpose of eliciting potent emotions among poor peasants, that is emotions ranging from vengeful joy and revolutionary zeal to anticipatory fear. As the movement escalated, multiple emotional communities crystallized: radicalized peasants and Party activists; anxious local elites anticipating retaliation; and broader social strata for whom the upheaval signified disorder rather than liberation. As a transformative event that intensified uncertainty and polarized emotional interpretations and practices, the

movement generated a volatile situation. The ultimate clashes among emotional communities, manifested in rumors, social panic, and the diminishing of public sympathy, separated the revolutionary coalition and ultimately contributed to the movement being violently suppressed.

**Zeyu Du (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg)** – *"Falling Like Flowers and Fruits": Sentimental Rhetoric and the Reshaping of Collective Identity among the Chinese Diaspora during the Early Cold War*

In the fraught geopolitical climate of the mid-1950s, the Chinese diasporic community faced dual challenges after 1949: the indefinite postponement of their return to the mainland and the precarious status of overseas Chinese in newly independent Southeast Asian nations. It was the moment when the exiled Hong Kong-based philosopher Tang Junyi proposed the influential term "The fall and demise of flowers and fruit" (Huaguo piaoling 花果飄零) in a series of essays in the early 1960s in the periodical Homeland 祖國. This paper argues that Tang's metaphor crystallized and amplified an already circulating affective mood within the Chinese overseas. Central to this sentiment were a deep sorrow for the lost homeland and a complex nostalgia for the traditional Chinese political order—a nostalgia fueled by disappointment with the KMT regime's weakness in protecting the Chinese overseas. Tang's rhetoric did more than lament; it actively sought to reshape "Chinese" identity, conceptualizing "Chineseness" as an emotional commitment sustained in exile. By analyzing the reception of this metaphor in contemporary periodicals and the media network behind it, this paper aims to reveal the politics of emotion among Chinese exiles during the Cold War crisis and to explore how this term, as a shared sentimental code, was deployed to forge a transnational affective community.

**Junyi Yang (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)** – *Emergent Affective Communities: Negotiating Work and Feeling in Contemporary Urban China*

This research investigates how affective communities emerge in contemporary Chinese workplaces, focusing on urban white-collar workers. While the formation of the Chinese middle class remains theoretically contested, this study proposes a different analytical entry point: instead of defining a social group through class status or political stance, it traces how identity is shaped through shared feelings and everyday practices of coping with work. Affective community does not arise from organized resistance or explicit indicators, but through shared experiences and subtle ways of enduring, negotiating, and imagining life otherwise. Using semi-structured interviews as the primary method, complemented by social media narratives on platforms such as Xiaohongshu and WeChat, this study follows how affects and emotions circulate across digital and physical spaces that are related to work in a broader sense, such as offices, commutes, lunch breaks, and WeChat groups. Taking dominant discourses like 996 or lying flat as the contextual Zeitgeist, this research reveals how everyday work is entangled with complex and shifting affective dynamics. Based on preliminary interviews and observations, I argue that the emotional life of white-collar workers cannot be understood through a binary of oppression versus resistance, but a dynamic process of constant affective negotiation. Workers develop their own "working arrangements," including small adjustments, pauses, refusals, or compromises that sustain daily life within constrained environments. These affective practices reveal fragile yet generative possibilities to reconsider the meaning of work in contemporary China.

[614] Martyna Świątczak-Borowy (University of Warsaw), Jakub Hrubý (Czech Academy of Sciences), Christian Soffel (Trier University) and Alexander Brosch (University of Münster). *Family Values in Chinese History.*

**Abstract.** Family cohesion has always been the foundation of Chinese society and never has the importance of the family as a timeless core reference group, an emotional and social safety net, and a link between generations been seriously questioned in China. Filial piety (xiao 孝) ascended early on to become the central family value and has maintained this status until today, despite undergoing manifold shifts in semantic meaning and conceptual scope. However, xiao never functioned alone and in isolation from associated values that constitute a family and distinguish it from other forms of social affiliation, so neither filial piety nor secondary family-related values can be considered entirely separate from the surrounding constellation of normative principles. In order to examine family values in diachronic comparison and shed light on continuities and ruptures, it is worthwhile to bring together a wide range of perspectives and engage in cross-epochal discourse. This is what our panel does by spanning a broad time frame to focus on the family in a value-centric way. Comprehensive philosophical models and abstractions are brought into dialogue with historical accounts and case studies are presented in a fruitful combination with analyses of prevailing value negotiation processes. This combination allows us to discuss exceptional events in greater depth, while also improving our understanding of the fundamentals of Chinese society yesterday and today.

**Keywords:** family, filial piety, social relationships, Confucianism

**Martyna Świątczak-Borowy (University of Warsaw)** – *Xiao Unpacked: Navigating the Layers of Filiality*

Filiality xiao 孝 is central to the Confucian value system. However, the meaning of xiao has never been static. First, it has denoted ritual communication with ancestors, later moral cultivation and proper social relationships, and eventually a hierarchy-oriented instrument of state power. Despite criticisms regarding its detrimental effect on broader pro-sociality (Liu 2023), few other Confucian virtues map so directly onto the lived experience of modern life. Yet, contemporary empirical studies on xiao often render inadequate results (Yeh 2003). In response to this cultural and methodological mismatch, Bedford and Yeh (2019) formulated the Dual Filial Piety Model (DFPM), which distinguishes two filial orientations. Reciprocal Filial Piety (RFP) stems from mutual affection and the need for interpersonal relatedness; Authoritarian Filial Piety (AFP) is rooted in hierarchy, obedience, and the need for belonging and social identity. This model allows xiao to be a functional universal (Norenzayan & Heine 2005) with application beyond the Chinese context.

However, reframing xiao as a "contextualized personality construct" might risk a conceptual flattening of its ontological, ritual, and cosmological dimensions. Porter's (2022) "cultural neuroscience" highlights how xiao can be traced back to a specific Neolithic experience mediated by changing environmental conditions and resulting in unique embodied practices. This suggests that xiao contains both universal elements and, in line with Li Zehou's account of cultural-psychological sedimentation, situationally accumulated layers. Rather than prescribing a single normative reconstruction, this framework opens conceptual space for navigating xiao's modern transformation while preserving its complex multidimensionality.

**Jakub Hrubý (Czech Academy of Sciences)** – *Sibling Relations and Family Ideals in Early Medieval Chinese Elite Society*

This paper examines the lived realities of sibling relationships within the early medieval Chinese elites, a period marked by the political fragmentation and chronic instability that followed the fall of the Han dynasty. In an age when ideological discourse increasingly emphasized Confucian moral constants—particularly filial piety (xiao 孝) and the broader constellation of family-centered virtues—the paper asks how such ideals functioned amid the pressures of endemic warfare, court factionalism, and the emergence of rival regimes. Drawing on close readings of dynastic histories such as the Sanguozhi and Jinshu, as well as anecdotal collections like the Shishuo xinyu, the paper explores the tension between normative prescriptions of familial solidarity and the strategic choices made by individual family members. Special attention is given to fraternal bonds and the dynamics between siblings, both male and female. Through case studies—including that of Jia Chong and the Langye Wang family—the paper illustrates how ideals of loyalty and cohesion interacted with competing allegiances to states, factions, and personal networks. By situating these micro-histories within the broader context of a society fractured on multiple levels, the study offers new insight into the flexibility, limits, and strategic deployment of family values in Early Medieval China.

**Christian Soffel (Trier University)** – *Ambiguities of xiao in the context of Song Confucianism*

The notions of filial piety (xiao 孝) and fraternal love (ti 悌) are widely considered to play a crucial role among the Confucian ethical values, as Master You 有子, a disciple of Confucius, considers them to be the foundation of humane behaviour (wei ren 為仁). However, throughout the Confucian canon texts (e.g. in the Lunyu and the Shang shu) we can find quite a few passages, where the boundaries between xiao and ti seem to become blurry, and sometimes the actual meanings of these words even get distorted. Furthermore, in several odes from the Shijing the character xiao itself conveys some additional meanings (like "sacrifice" or "model oneself on"). My contribution analyses how scholars in later dynasties – in particular in the Song dynasty – deal with these tensions. While most literati just overlook this issue, some use this material to build a philosophical bridge between the different Confucian core values, extending multiple family relations to the realm of ghosts and spirits. A good example is Yang Jian 楊簡 (1141–1226), a representative of the "school of mind and heart", who uses this ambiguity in developing a link between the inner self-cultivation and outward respect to other human beings.

**Alexander Brosch (University of Münster)** – *The Value of Living Together: Family Co-Residence in Song Dynasty Prescriptive and Personal Literature*

The belief that family cohesion should include sharing a common dwelling with several generations and a wide circle of family members is an ideal that permeated imperial China and is closely linked to the core family value of filial piety. Along with rapid population growth and increasing decentralization, the value of co-residence gained new momentum in Middle Imperial China— among other developments, the term "righteous residence" (yiju 義居) became more prevalent, complementing the legally relevant category of "co-residence" (tongju 同居). Even beyond the large and wealthy family clans, it can be observed that sibling co-residence, for instance, was regarded as more

than just an economic necessity and a source of conflict.
This paper examines letters and offering texts from the Middle Imperial period and highlights the emotional aspects of co-residence. Thus, existing evidence regarding moral concepts related to co-residence in prescriptive literature, namely family instructions and commentary literature, is supplemented with person-centered perspectives. Particular attention is paid to topics such as reminiscences of a communal past, shared experiences of poverty, and unfulfilled longings for joint residence, with the aim of situating co-residence within the context of its legal, moral, practical, and emotional dimensions.

[616] Xiangyu Liao (University of Zurich). *Reclassifying Cantonese Folk Songs: Conceptual Overlap in Mùyúgē, Mōyúgē, and Dàngē (1600-1900).*

**Abstract.** From 1600 to 1900, the Cantonese folk-song generic title mōyúgē 摸魚歌 'Scooping-Fish Song' carried dual meanings: it could refer to the same type of Cantonese storytelling as mùyúgē 木魚歌 'Wooden-Fish Song', or denote short seven-syllabic ballads. The latter showed clear affinities with dàngē 蛋歌 'Tan-songs' performed by the dànrén 蛋人 'boat-dwelling communities' of Guangdong. Meanwhile, mùyúgē and Dàn frequently co-occurrence in records. This led earlier scholarship to treat mōyúgē and mùyúgē as synonymous (e.g., Tan 1989, Chen 2016), obscuring the genre boundaries and origins. This study clarifies the conceptual distinctions among mùyúgē, mōyúgē, and dàngē through both synchronic and diachronic analysis. Synchronically, the confusion between the first two terms derives from Cantonese phonetic similarity— muk 木 'wooden' and mok 摸 'scoop'— which reflects the non-standardized nature of oral literary transcription and the frequent interchange of homophonous character. Diachronically, the semantic field of mōyúgē shifted between storytelling and ballad, drive-n largely by the predominance of non-Cantonese literati sources that framed these traditions from an "outsider" perspective. Moreover, the water-based lifestyle of dàn communities and persistent gendered stereotypes surrounding women who sang for subsistence played important roles in shaping the evolving relationship among the three terms. This study proposes a classification that distinguishes "ballad" from "storytelling" by length within Cantonese folk-song traditions: dàngē belongs to the former, mùyúgē to the latter, while the attribution of mōyúgē should be period-specific. This framework provides a foundation for further inquiry into the origins and rhyme structures of these genres.
**Keywords:** mōyúgē, mùyúgē, dàngē, Cantonese folksongs, homophonous characters, semantic development, genre classification

[618] Shiqi Cai (The University of Edinburgh), Yanni Liang (The University of Edinburgh) and Weiyu Yuan (Durham University). *Unto a Full-Grown Man: Death, Identity, and Moral Becoming in Transitional China.*

**Abstract.** This dual-panel event assembles four case studies situated in pivotal transitional moments of Chinese history. Together, these papers examine how individuals and communities confronted the death of the body or the disintegration of the spirit, and how such crises became occasions to recalibrate moral identity, social belonging, and the meaning of becoming "a full-grown man." Designed as two panels in dialogue, the event highlights two distinct yet interrelated modes of inquiry. The first panel concentrates on the social and practical dimension: how death, mourning, and corporeal vulnerability served as mechanisms through which communities defined responsibility, articulated exemplary conduct, and reconstructed collective order during times of upheaval. The second panel, by contrast, turns to the philosophical and moral plane, exploring how intellectuals grappled with spiritual loss or existential rupture by reformulating religious, ethical, or metaphysical frameworks. Through this structured pairing, the event illuminates how actors negotiated between immediate social imperatives and higher-order visions of moral or spiritual self-fashioning. The panel includes an analysis of collaborative textual practices that shaped Lü Zuqian's posthumous image; an investigation of early Daoist illness-avoidance theories articulated in the encyclopedic compendium Wushang Miyao; an examination of the interpretations of Zhuangzi dating from the Ming–Qing rupture, discussing how to live a life and how to face death; and an exploration of early Republican attempts to reconstruct selfhood amid the dissolution of long-standing spiritual frameworks.
**Keywords:** Death, Identity, Spirit, Selfhood

**Shiqi Cai (The University of Edinburgh)** – *Rejecting Martyrdom as a Virtuous Confucian: Literati's Alternative Choice in the 17th century China*

The Ming-Qing dynastic transition was a decade-long period ruled by chaos in the 17th century. During this transition, martyrdom was a common occurrence, and attracted the attention of researchers. This research, however, aims to reveal a hidden angle of the period from a closed case study. Lin Yunming (林云銘, 1628-1697)

lived through the Ming-Qing transition period and its subsequent conflicts, all of which significantly influenced his whole life. In 1658, Lin became a Judge in Huizhou. His brief stint in office was marked by a power struggle between the Qing government and Zheng Chenggong. After resigning his official career and going back to Fujian, Lin was imprisoned by rebels during the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories, where he faced a crisis - whether to martyr himself, or to live at the cost of betraying himself. Though surviving after the Rebellion, Lin's virtue was still accepted by later generations.

In this research, Lin's writings composed during and after the Rebellion, together with his commentary on Zhuangzi, will serve as primary resources. This study traces the process through which Lin resolved the tension between the prevailing belief of martyrdom and his desire to remain alive. The research demonstrates that by Confucianising Zhuangzi, Lin re-established his own loyalty not only to the Qing government but also to Confucianism. His case reveals a broader acceptance of a diverse understanding of life and death in the 17th and 18th centuries, an aspect largely overlooked by previous scholarship on this topic.

**Yanni Liang (The University of Edinburgh)** – *Longevity and Death in the Individual: Taoist Conceptions of the Body and Spirits in Wushang miyao Volume 5*

Wushang miyao 无上秘要 is an encyclopedic Taoist compendium compiled under the commission of Emperor Wu of Northern Zhou (r. 560-578), who sought to enforce the policy of suppressing Buddhism and promote a doctrine that can guide moral conduct and this-worldly practice. By constructing a Taoist cosmology and a view of human life, Wushang miyao presents an ideology that emphasizes this-worldly cultivation and the pursuit of longevity or immortality. This study examines the relationship between the body and the spirits in Volume 5 of Wushang miyao which is a central piece of this ideology. Volume 5 extends the cosmological discussions of the preceding sections to the human body and its inner spirits, exploring how longevity and death are embodied in the individual within the Taoist view of the cosmos. Two kinds of spirits are distinguished: the "mind-spirit", which forms prior to birth through the condensation of qi 气, and the spirits that inhabit each part of the body. The body and the spirits are mutually generative and complementary. Through daily interaction with the spirits within the body, individuals can avoid illness, preserve bodily integrity, and ultimately attain oneness with the mind spirit. In this process, one may achieve longevity and transcendence. By contrast, neglecting one's qi, body, or spirits, results in death and disintegration, marking a departure from the true essence. This construction of the body and its inner spirits served as both a cosmological framework and an ideological instrument reinforcing the political vision of Emperor Wu.

**Weiyu Yuan, Durham University** – *The "Death" of Spiritual Life: The Struggled Deconstruction of "Selfhood" Through The Reconceptualisation of geren (个人) in Early 20th Century China*

This paper provides a new perspective on interpreting how the concept of geren (个人), human selfhood, was articulated in the 1910s debate between Western and Chinese culture among the Chinese intelligentsia. It investigates how the intellectuals reconceptualised "selfhood" in various hybrid forms of new knowledge that evolved from both post-Enlightenment values and Chinese classical readings. It argues, from a conceptual-historical perspective, that the recalibration of geren reflects the intellectuals' struggles to preserve "spiritual life" in modern selfhood at the expense of eroding Chinese tradition. In China's traditional worldview, the idea of shen (身) and its underlying emphasis on human interconnectedness had long represented selfhood and served as the carrier of the human spiritual world until 1905, when the imperial examination system was abolished. During the debate, the intellectuals were deeply convinced that the value of "liberty", embedded in the modern Western idea of selfhood—the "liberal individual"—was essential for China's national survival. Hence, they hybridised these two forms of selfhood to reconceptualise geren. However, "liberal individual" could not be realised without liberation from social constraints, which is intrinsically at odds with the human interconnectedness emphasised in shen. This paper argues that although the intellectuals sought various ways to incorporate "liberty" without damaging this core of spiritual life, the traditional carrier of the human spirit was inevitably destroyed in this hasty hybridisation, while the envisioned "new" carrier failed to be installed, leading to an "emptiness" in the spiritual world of China's modern understanding of selfhood.

[619] Claire Ruo Fan Ping (University of Cambridge). *Relics of the post-socialist ruin: men and masculinities in "Neo-Dongbei Literature".*

**Abstract.** Fiction and non-fiction writings that portray the region of Northeast China, or Dongbei,have drawn critical and popular attention since the mid-2010s. Tentatively labelled "Neo-Dongbei Literature", these works are recognised for revisiting experiences of mass layoffs anddecline in the Northeastern industrial heartland as Reform and Opening-up led to therestructuring of state-owned factories. Though existing scholarship recognise recurringrepresentations of disempowered male workers, who lost their privileged status during marketreforms,

few studies have approached Neo-Dongbei Literature specifically through angles ofgender analysis. Focusing on short stories by Shuang Xuetao, Ban Yu, and Zheng Zhi, threewriters who are consistently discussed as part of the loosely defined “Neo-Dongbei Writers”,this paper investigates shared gendered narratives that interweave the demise of socialistindustrial Dongbei with the emasculation of two generations of working-class men. Examiningcharacter tropes of “worker-fathers” across texts, I trace the symbolic castration of both regionand men through intersecting spatial and temporal imaginaries. Delving subsequently intoanalyses of paratexts, such as book covers and interviews, I unravel constructions of the writers’authorial images that posit them as symbolic “sons”, overlapping with textual figures ofdisenfranchised younger working-class men, of an imagined community of victimised workersfor whose intergenerational trauma their works are presumed to speak. Lastly, I contextualiseNeo-Dongbei Literature within renegotiations of masculinities in the post-Mao era andescalating male anxieties in contemporary Chinese society, highlighting the gendered aspect ofthe literary phenomenon which responds to an emergent “crisis of masculinity” at the presentsocioeconomic conjuncture.
**Keywords:** Neo-Dongbei Literature, Masculinities, Contemporary Chinese Culture

[622] Marta Bianco (University of Napoli "L'Orientale"). *A Love Bigger than the Plateau: An Ecocritical Reading of the Novel Ciluo de Kekexili.*

**Abstract.** This paper offers an ecocritical reading of the children’s novel Ciluo de Kekexili 《次洛的可可西里》 (Qingdao Publishing House, 2024) by Long Renqing 龙仁青, a bilingual Tibetan–Chinese writer and expert naturalist of the ecology of the Qinghai–Tibet Plateau. This coming-of-age novel follows the young Ciluo and is set in the region of Hoh Xili, which becomes a symbolic extension of the sudden loss of his mother—an omnipresent figure whose love continues to cast its light across the plateau landscape.

By rooting human identity in the natural world, the novel deconstructs anthropocentrism and foregrounds a biocentric ethic attentive to the survival strategies of the plateau’s flora and fauna, which embody adaptive resilience and symbiotic relations. At the centre of this vision stands the maternal figure whose love is portrayed as diffused across the vast grasslands. Through this metaphor, the plateau emerges as a generative entity shaped not by human dominance but by shared ecological care, and loss becomes an ecological experience lived through the wind, plants, and animals of Hoh Xili.

With its poetic prose and ecological sensitivity grounded in Tibetan tradition, Ciluo de Kekexili contributes both to ecological pedagogy and to contemporary ecocritical discourse, in which the fragility of life forms the basis for interspecies solidarity. Through close reading, this paper shows how the novel reconceptualises the plateau as a complex living community, inviting to recognise interdependence as the ethical foundation of all relations.
**Keywords:** 1. ecocriticism, 2. sinophone literature, 3. Long Renqing, 4. Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, 5. interdependence

[626] Zi Wang (Beijing Foreign Studies University). *“Transnational Chinese Painting” in the Early 1960s: the Encounter between Chang Dai-chien and André Masson in Paris.*

**Abstract.** This article advances the study of contemporary Chinese art through a case study that affirms Craig Clunas’s concept of “transnational Chinese painting” within the framework of “interaction” in postwar global art history. It begins by examining a little-known 1961 meeting in Paris between Chang Dai-chien, one of the most celebrated Chinese painters of the twentieth century, and André Masson, the French artist whose postwar work embodies a distinctive synthesis of diverse influences, including Chinese calligraphy and ink painting. This encounter was shaped by the enduring impact of the reciprocal transmission of Chinese culture to the West during the first half of the twentieth century. From May to June 1961, Chang’s monumental ink painting Lotus in Wind was exhibited at the Musée Cernuschi, and his extended conversation with Masson was published in L’ Express on June 15. The dialogue highlights fundamental differences between Eastern and Western painting in philosophical foundations, aesthetic aims, and painterly practices. Masson admired Chinese painting’s union of spirit and matter and its freedom of expression, while Chang emphasized its traditions and innovations—spiritual resonance, coherence in creation, and the meticulous study of materials. Building on this exchange, the study investigates how “transnational Chinese painting” was co-produced by Chang and Masson, the extent to which this concept diverged from their earlier understandings of Chinese painting, and the ways in which the use of ink and brush evolved in their artistic practice.
**Keywords:** Transnational Chinese painting, Chang Dai-chien, André Masson, Paris, interaction

[629] Kazuko Kojima (Keio University), Tomoo Marukawa (University of Tokyo) and Yue Xu (Keio University). *China and 'Socialism' during the Cold War.*

**Abstract.** Throughout the Cold War, the international environment surrounding the People's Republic of China was marked by constant fluidity. Sino-Soviet relations shifted dramatically from an early honeymoon to open confrontation, and it took nearly three decades before rapprochement was finally achieved. Although China drew closer to the United States for strategic reasons in the context of the struggle against the Soviet Union, bilateral relations were perpetually shaped by destabilizing factors, most notably the Taiwan issue. Beyond the United States and the Soviet Union, China's connections with other socialist states, socialist movements, as well as Japan, offered a wide range of options for securing national security and economic development.

China thus pursued the construction of a "socialist" system suited to its own conditions while navigating an international environment far more diverse and fluid than what much of the existing scholarship has typically assumed.

This panel investigates how the Chinese Communist Party sought to build such a context-specific socialist system by examining both political dimensions (public security and order-maintenance institutions) and economic dimensions (labor policy and industrial organization). Each paper contributes to a more flexible and nuanced understanding of what "socialism" meant in the Chinese experience during the Cold War.

**Keywords:** Chinese Communist Party, Cold War, Socialism

**Kazuko Kojima (Keio University)** – *Rebuilding China's Public Security Apparatus in the Early Reform Era and the Soviet Model*

This paper investigates how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) drew on, adapted, or distanced itself from the Soviet model when reconstructing China's public security apparatus in the early Reform and Opening period. After 1949, the CCP had intentionally rejected the highly centralized and coercive system of unified control exercised by the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs, choosing instead to build a decentralized structure anchored in Party organs. This basic orientation remained intact after the Cultural Revolution. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the reconstruction of public security relied on the collaboration between the Political-Legal Committees established within Party committees at every administrative level and the public security organs. This institutional configuration took concrete shape through the "Strike Hard (yanda)" campaigns and the development of the Comprehensive Management of Public Security framework. By contrast, the Criminal Law enacted to restore social order drew heavily on Soviet criminal law, particularly in its substantive conception of crime and its acceptance of the analogical application of criminal law. These elements legitimized broad discretionary authority for the politically intertwined Political-Legal Committees and public security organs, enabling them to exercise expansive coercive power. Consequently, China rebuilt a multilayered and decentralized public security system in which Party committees, Political-Legal Committees, and public security organs collectively wielded significant authority. The central leadership's mechanisms for macro-level control—limited largely to personnel, budgetary tools, and Party discipline—proved insufficient, leaving the Party Center to grapple with the challenge of maintaining consistent oversight.

**Tomoo Marukawa (University of Tokyo)** – *Hidden and Bloated: In-house Service Sector in the "Third Front" Factories*

From 1965 until the late 1970s, many industrial enterprises were erected in the mountainous region of China's inland as a preparation for the coming war with the United States or with the Soviet Union. The whole project was call "the Construction of the Third Front (Sanxian jianshe)." Since these factories were located in places far away from the cities, they had to build in-house service facilities such as canteens, kindergartens, clinics, elementary schools for their employees. Some factories even had farms to grow vegetables or other crops to supply their employees. Within an industrial complex, each factory was built far away from other factories so that they could not be easily detected and bombarded by the enemies. As the factories were scattered, each factory had its own in-house service facilities, leading to the bloated structure and inefficiency in the Third-Front enterprises. Such structure exacerbated their problem of redundant workforce and low efficiency after the reform. This study will report and analyze the in-house service sector in one of the major projects of the Third Front Construction, the Second Automotive Works (Dier qiche zhizaochang), which was located in the western part of Hubei Province.

**Yue Xu (Keio University)** – *Ideology, Reality, and Unemployment Policy in a Socialist State: China's Perspective on Soviet and Eastern European Policies*

By the late 1970s, following the end of the Cultural Revolution and the launch of Reform and Opening, the People's Republic of China again confronted the unemployment problem that socialism had long claimed to have eliminated. Within the evolving landscape of socialist reform in the 1980s, the commitment to abolishing the "industrial reserve

army" came into tension with the need for labor mobility under the soft budget constraints of planned economies, and each socialist state sought its own balance between ideology and the practical demands of employment reform. Against this broader backdrop of socialist diversity, this paper examines how Chinese labor authorities observed, interpreted, and drew on Soviet and Eastern European experience to address China's unemployment and labor reform. China's labor system had taken shape under demographic pressures, the urban–rural structure, and the administrative logic of the planned economy. These conditions, together with the Sino-Soviet split, produced a distinctive understanding of unemployment and labor mobility. When unemployment resurfaced in the early reform years, China drew renewed attention to Soviet and Eastern European experiences. Using archival materials from the Labor Department, the paper reconstructs how China's bureaucratic apparatus observed, reinterpreted, and applied foreign socialist experiences, which in turn shaped the transition from justifying unemployment through the "social labor reserve" to recognizing a "labor market" within socialism. This shift also reveals how China reinterpreted labor reform and the socialist system itself during the reform and the crisis period of the socialist world from a multi-level perspective.

[631] Naixi Feng (Tsinghua University), Ning Xu (Tsinghua University), Wendong Cui (The Chinese University of Hong Kong) and Xiaorui Zhou (Harvard University). *She herself a Heroine: Recasting the Female Ideal from the Early Modern Period to Modern China.*

**Abstract.** This panel investigates the construction and transformation of the Chinese heroine narrative from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century. Drawing on a diverse range of sources, including fiction, prosimetric narratives, translated works and private diaries written by male and female authors, the four papers interrogate how the figure of the "heroine" was shaped and redefined across shifting historical contexts.

Feng's study of Chen Duansheng's tanci explores how heroines subvert traditional "scholar-beauty" roles and establish a revolutionary narrative tradition in the High Qing. Adopting a subaltern perspective, Xu questions elite heroines, examining a lower-class "Rivers and Lakes" jianghu figure Hou Yiniang as an antithesis to the ties between chastity preservation and the nature of female heroism. Cui examines how late Qing female writer Tang Hongfu, a former student in Japan who immersed herself in Russo-Japanese War literature, established through translation and adaptation a new type of heroine—a woman warrior who forsakes chastity or life for the nation-state. Zhou examines the complex textual and cinematic transformations of wartime sexual violence victims during the Nanjing Massacre into heroines of domestic acclaim.

Collectively, these papers form a critical dialogue on the overlooked diversity of the Chinese heroine from early modern to modern China. During seismic political and social transformations, the literary and historical figure of the "heroine" becomes a symbolic site for debate and contestation. This panel charts the lesser-known stories of unconventional variants, historiographical resistance, and narrative gaps. This new dialogue on Chinese heroines across time embodies deeper critical issues, such as class anxieties, ideas of the body, and structures of power.

**Keywords:** Chinese heroine, Gender history, Narrative transformation

**Feng Naixi (Tsinghua University) The "Anti-Virtue" Heroine: Literary Tradition and Ethical Transgression in the Eighteenth-century Tanci Novel Zaisheng Yuan (The Destiny of Rebirth)**

Zaisheng Yuan (The Destiny of Rebirth), an outstanding tanci (story-singing) novel from 18th-century China, stands as a representative female-authored work of late imperial China with its remarkable length of over 600,000 characters. Its author, the Qing dynasty woman writer Chen Duansheng, created Meng Lijun, an unprecedented heroine who not only achieves social success by disguising herself as a man but also emerges as an archetype of "anti-feminine virtue" challenging Confucian ethical norms, which were increasingly regulating female conduct during the High Qing era. Centering on the text of Zaisheng Yuan and incorporating the seminal research and debates of historians Chen Yinke and Guo Moruo in the 1950s, this paper employs close reading to analyze the work's intertextual relationship with the scholar-beauty (caizi jiaren) literary tradition. By examining themes such as "self-portraiture," "rescuing the father," "extensive travel," "sexual chastity," and "the happy ending of polygamy," this study outlines the novel's transformation, resistance, and transcendence of prior narrative conventions. It highlights how Chen Duansheng's female characters, epitomized by Meng Lijun, collectively subvert traditional roles of daughter, wife, and mother, dismantling the dominance of patriarchy, conjugal authority, and sovereign power. Although subsequently rewritten and suppressed in later adaptations (as demonstrated by Liang Desheng and Hou Zhi's editing), the original text established a truly revolutionary tradition in women's writing.

**Xu Ning (Tsinghua University)** – *Body, Autonomy, and Everyday Heroism: Hou Yiniang's Subversion of the Ming–Qing Heroine Trope*

The stories of the heroine, which rose to prominence during the Ming and Qing dynasties, focus intently on the issue of chastity. These women were positioned within the tumultuous settings originally designed for men, such as the court, the battlefield, and the Jianghu. And they were frequently assumed roles of authority that are conventionally occupied by men. The issue of women's chastity is often resolved through literary devices such as male disguise or divine intervention—conventions that preserve moral propriety while diminishing the significance of women's achievements by subordinating it to an obsession with absolute virtue. This narrative compromise reflects the elitist underpinnings of traditional portrayals of female heroism. And this simplified approach not only sidesteps the dilemma but, more importantly, reveals its fundamental impossibility within the framework of practices. This paper examines Hou Yiniang, a character from the 17th-century novel Tuowu Xianping, as a variant of the "exemplary heroine." Portrayed as a lower-class performer adrift in the "jianghu" along the Grand Canal, Hou inherits the literary tradition of "women of valour" while simultaneously embodying remarkable sexual autonomy. The management over her own body constitutes a fundamental component of personal autonomy—an essential attribute of a fully realized social individual. Through Hou's narrative, the author confronts a pivotal question: What remains for women when chastity is removed? Her story defines a new form of everyday heroism, rooted in the lives of ordinary women—one that can only be realized within a distinctly female experience.

**Wendong Cui (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)** – *New Heroine in New Narrative: Late Qing Female Writer Tang Hongfu's Appropriation of Japanese War Literature*

This article examines how Tang Hongfu, a late Qing female writer who had previously studied in Japan, established a new type of heroine image—a woman warrior who devotes her chastity or life to the nation-state—in her translated fiction, Biographies of Two Heroines in Lvshun (1909). Having immersed herself in Japanese war literature produced during the Russo-Japanese War, Tang particularly selected two stories about a Japanese female spy and a Russian female soldier for translation and adaptation. These choices aligned with the convergence of three contemporary movements in late Qing China: the fiction revolution, the revolution of the women's sphere, and the boom of heroic biographies. Although building on the "good wife, wise mother" (ryōsai kenbo) model found in the original Japanese texts, Tang transformed it with late Qing Chinese values to forge the potent archetype of the woman warrior embodying loyalty and valor. To enhance the texts' reliability, she even reconfigured the original stories into seemingly biographical accounts, imitating Liang Qichao's narrative mode of heroic biographies and Qiu Jin's epitaph (muzhiming) style. By depicting heroines who forsake chastity or life, Tang strove to secure for women an everlasting fame equal to that of men.

**Xiaorui Zhou (Harvard University)** – *Zooming In, Zooming Out: Wartime Sexual Violence, Female Heroines, and Its Visibility in the Second Sino-Japanese War*

This paper probes the depiction of one incident of the Japanese military abduction of twenty-one Chinese refugee women in December 1937 during the Nanjing Massacre in private diaries and correspondence in 1937-1938 and cultural productions in 2000s and 2010s. Drawing on historical sources, literary analysis, and media studies, the paper argues that wartime and postwar discourses have charged women - in turn victims and heroines - with hypersexuality on the one hand and hypermorality on the other. Crucially, many iterations of Chinese nationalism had relied on concepts like womanhood and "chastity" to articulate its visions of national essence, national humiliation, and loyalty. This paper focuses on a bestseller novella, "Thirteen Hairpins of Ginling", and its adapted international blockbuster movie, "Flowers of War". Both played a critical role in molding the popular memory of the Nanjing Massacre in China, with the aforementioned incident of military abduction of civilian women at the centre of the plot. I contend that it is worth exploring the historical sources behind and around the incident, not just to flag the difference between fact and fiction, but to reflect on the structural forces undergirding the space in between victims, female heroines, and the gendered script of the nation.

[636] Pauline D'Abrigeon (Baur Foundation, Museum of Far Eastern Art), Yongsong Zheng (China Academy of Art) and Ruowei Dai (Shanghai Museum). *Translating Technique: European Interpretations of Qing-Dynasty Porcelain Technology and Knowledge.*

**Abstract.** The transmission and exchange of technical knowledge constitute a compelling dimension of cross-cultural studies. Such circulation not only concerns aesthetic preferences and artistic taste but also refracts cultural concepts and mutual perceptions embedded in different contexts. During the Ming and Qing periods, Chinese porcelain was widely exported to Europe, where it became an object of avid consumption and imitation. How did European ceramic connoisseurs and manufacturers investigate Chinese porcelain? In what ways did they comprehend Chinese porcelain-making techniques and draw inspiration from them? What kinds of ideas and epistemologies were reflected in their interpretations of Chinese ceramic technology? Furthermore, from which

analytical perspectives can we examine the cross-cultural translation of porcelain-manufacturing skills?
Objects, design drawings, and images depicting manufacturing processes all served, to varying degrees, as media for conveying technical knowledge and information. From the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, France was at the forefront of collecting information on Chinese porcelain production, acquiring raw material samples, and developing specialized studies of Chinese ceramics. Focusing on France, the three presenters in this panel each examine one type of material—porcelain objects, porcelain designs, and process illustrations—to explore how French product development, aesthetic orientations, and theoretical research on ceramic technology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reflected their understanding and assessment of Chinese porcelain-making techniques.
The transmission and translation of knowledge and technology are never confined to a single time or place. As this panel demonstrates, the Qing-era ceramic practices that French researchers—particularly those associated with the Sèvres Manufactory—sought to investigate and engage with were not limited to Jingdezhen but also encompassed Dehua and other kiln sites. Moreover, the dissemination of Qing porcelain-making information was closely connected to Canton (Guangzhou). The circulation and reproduction of objects and images across different locations and regions intersected with technological practices and conceptual frameworks, collectively forming an integral part of the life history of porcelains.
**Keywords:** Qing Dynasty, Porcelain, Technology

**Pauline D'Abrigeon (Baur Foundation, Museum of Far Eastern Art)** – *The journey of a seven-border dish in 19th century France*
The so-called 'seven-bordered' dishes produced during the Yongzheng era for export to Europe attracted renewed interest in France in the nineteenth century. How can we explain this revival almost a century after the creation of these works? In this paper, we will examine a selection of collections to analyse the reasons for this craze, from the creation of nomenclature for these pieces, through their technical interest, to their valuation on the art market.
In 1862, the art historian Albert Jacquemart included the 'seven borders' dish in the vast category of Japanese famille roses. This false attribution spread widely through the art market in the 1860s and 1870s and was not called into question until after Jacquemart's death in 1875. However, he debates surrounding the origin of these works in no way hindered the very high prices they fetched in auction rooms. French porcelain makers also admired the technical aspects of these works. These finely painted opaque enamels in relief were the subject of a veritable quest by porcelain decorators such as Jules Lesme, and by the Sèvres manufactory, which immersed itself in the chemical study of Chinese enamels, producing the first imitation of a seven-border dish in the 1880s. While the history of Asian art collections and the study of the Parisian market have been enriched by recent works that have become essential, approaches based on the biography of objects (Appadurai, Kopytoff) have been rarer. Yet the analysis of the trajectories of works sheds indispensable light on questions of expertise, nomenclature, the forgery market, and monetary value.
**Yongsong Zheng (China Academy of Art)** – *Translating Chinese Craft in Industrial France: The Sèvres Dehua Experiment*
Building upon the research of Antoine d'Albis, chief chemist of the Sèvres Royal Porcelain Manufactory, this paper examines the technical and aesthetic exchanges between China and Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, centering on Dehua white porcelain. During this period, European interest in Chinese ceramics shifted from the early fascination with exotic imagery toward a concrete investigation and reconstruction of production techniques. In 1832, the Sèvres manufactory produced detailed technical drawings based on an openwork cup, intending to analyze the making process and provide a model for re-creation. These images underwent multiple layers of "translation" within the design and manufacturing system, reflecting the Western pursuit of accurately mastering Eastern ceramic technologies while aligning with the eclectic aesthetic of the industrial era. The resulting French porcelains incorporated diverse cultural elements into a single material form, becoming bespoke luxury vessels and diplomatic gifts that symbolized national craftsmanship and technological ambition. As a point of intersection between cross-cultural perception and material practice, Dehua porcelain contributed to the re-contextualization of Eastern techniques within European ceramic traditions and deeply influenced the reconfiguration of technical ideals and aesthetic paradigms in nineteenth-century Europe.
**Ruowei Dai (Shanghai Museum)** – *Canton Export Paintings of Porcelain-Production Through the Lens of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century French Ceramic Scholarship*
Before the eighteenth century, Europe lacked its own porcelain-making technology, and published information on ceramic production was scarce. In the first half of the eighteenth century, most reliable knowledge of Chinese

porcelain manufacture available in Europe came from two letters sent from China to France by Francois Xavier d'Entrecolles. Previous scholarship has tended to treat these letters as key evidence of the westward transmission of Chinese porcelain knowledge, while overlooking the porcelain-production images found in Canton export paintings—works that had been continuously imported into Europe since the eighteenth century and often regarded as travel souvenirs. Although these images contain only limited technical information and lack accuracy, they nonetheless attracted the attention of contemporary European ceramic researchers and, to some extent, shaped European understandings of Chinese porcelain technology. Drawing on the collection and study of Canton export paintings of porcelain-production in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France, this paper examines the transmission and construction of ceramic technological knowledge through images within a cross-cultural context.

[637] Amandine Péronnet (Inalco - Aix-Marseille Université), Leo Maximilian Koenig (Universität Hamburg), Juliette Duléry (University of Liège), Richard Ellguth (Freie Universität Berlin), Lan Jiang Fu (Université Paris Est Créteil), Christian Meyer (Freie Universität Berlin), Katharina Wenzel-Teuber (China-Zentrum e.V., Sankt Augustin) and Qijun Zheng (EPHE – Université Paris Sciences et Lettres). *Career Paths of Religious Elites: Education and Institutional Affiliations across Chinese Religions.*

**Abstract.** In today's China, the making of religious elites is closely tied to education and institutional belonging. In the Buddhist context, institutionalized education within Buddhist Academies appears to be a prerequisite for leaders occupying state-sanctioned influential positions, whether administrative or religious. Moreover, most religious leaders today must display alignment with political expectations and discourses, affiliating themselves with institutions such as national, provincial, and local religious associations in order to obtain legitimacy and influence in decision-making processes. Power distribution in the People's Republic of China is thus often linked to educational trajectories and institutional positions, which structure the career paths of religious elites.

This panel proposes to explore the broader dynamics of elite formation across Chinese religions by comparing models of education and institutional affiliation found in Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity, Islam, and other traditions. We ask how these models shape influence and social status, bring in resources, and create networks of religious elites, and how they intersect with political expectations. By bringing together scholars working on different religious traditions, the panel aims to identify common patterns and divergent trends in these career paths. In doing so, it seeks to refine the comparative study of elite formation and to contribute to a broader understanding of the intersections between education, politics, and religious leadership in the People's Republic of China.

**Keywords:** elites, religious traditions, education, politics

**Juliette Duléry (University of Liège)** – *New affinities between Christianity and private companies between Taiwan, Hong Kong and China*

This presentation tackles the affinities between churches and the business world between Taiwan, Hong Kong and China. Weber (1904) famously analysed the "elective affinities" between capitalism and the protestant ethics in the 17th-century English-speaking world. Taiwanese megachurches are rather influenced by the doctrine of prosperity theology and positive psychology (Bowler 2013). Since the 1980s, worldwide evangelical and charismatic Christians have developed methods inspired by this doctrine, as well as neoliberal commitment practices and a therapeutic understanding of faith. For instance, the American Christian "apostle" C. Peter Wagner considers that the business world must become a foundation for the "great transfer of wealth" to the church. In this presentation, I rely on interviews with entrepreneurs and ethnographic observations of business spaces to analyse these affinities. I conducted a multi-sited fieldwork between Taipei, Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Beijing (2019-2020) during my PhD dissertation. I argue that these affinities are mainly financial. Megachurches rely on the support from Christian entrepreneurs through donations and philanthropic activism. They also share other affinities, especially regarding the management of their staff. Some mega-church pastors run their team similarly to entrepreneurs. They encourage their staff to invest their emotions to serve the religious organisation, at the risk of burn-out. Inside companies, the evangelisation of workers by Christian bosses facilitates similar clientelist and psychologically intrusive practices.

**Richard Ellguth (Freie Universität Berlin)** – *Introducing the New Project 'Religion in China Matters' (2026-2029): A Case Study on Discursive Elites and Chinese Religious Diasporas in Germany*

Ever since people from mainland China migrated to Germany, religion has been an important factor for providing meaning and direction, as well as for creating communities. Whether Bible study groups, Uyghur Muslim communities, Buddhist fellowships, or Falun Gong groups — Chinese religious communities in Germany have

become places characterized not only by strong social cohesion, but also by having powerful religious leaders. Often, these religious diasporas and their leaders have displayed a distinctly political profile that has touched on the sensitivities of the Chinese Communist Party and its sub-organizations. Religious leaders can play various roles in relation to their home country, ranging from political loyalty to extreme opposition. Some have not only sparked potential conflicts by creating collective identities through religion (centralization of religious scriptures, use of sacred language) and therefore deviating from the secular-patriotic ideal of community building of the CCP, but also through commenting on Chinese politics. Acting as transnational discursive elites, these pastors, imams, lamas and other leaders have employed a multiplicity of channels (social media, workshops, sit-ins, political hearings and many more) to shape public discourses on diaspora communities, religion and the agency of the Chinese state. Introducing the new project "Religion in China Matters: Religions in German-Chinese Political and Social Cooperation", this paper will present findings on how to map Chinese religious diasporas and their leaders in Germany. Analyzing the profile and career paths of these actors, the diaspora communities and also umbrella organizations in a comparative fashion, this paper combines discourse analysis and field studies.

**Lan Jiang Fu (Université Paris Est Créteil)** – *Training to Lead: Confucian Entrepreneurs and the Making of a Moral and Economic Elite in Contemporary China*

This paper examines the Confucian revival that has been shaping contemporary China since the early twenty-first century and investigates how certain entrepreneurs draw on the educational, ritual, and symbolic resources of Confucianism to construct a leadership founded on virtue. It seeks to answer the following question: How do Confucian entrepreneurs articulate moral education, economic activity, and ideological alignment to present themselves as virtuous and socially legitimate elites? The paper is organized around three axes: The first axis explores the different pathways, networks, and educational practices through which these entrepreneurs train themselves as moral elites, drawing on Confucianism and, more broadly, traditional Chinese culture. The second axis analyzes how Confucian values are translated into entrepreneurial practice, including "Confucian management," corporate social responsibility, and the public valorization of success as a sign of virtue. The third axis examines the institutional and political modes of legitimation for these moral elites, who operate within the frameworks of moral governance promoted by the State, navigating the tension between ideological alignment and ethical autonomy. By articulating education, leadership, and recognition, this study highlights the making of a hybrid elite — both economic and moral — tasked with promoting the moralization of Chinese society in line with state expectations, at the heart of the contemporary reappropriation of Confucianism in China.

**Leo Maximilian Koenig (Université Paris Est Créteil)** – *A Decline in Religious Faith? Exploring the Impact of Buddhist Seminary Education on the Reception of Buddhist Scriptures among Chinese Buddhist Elites*

It is now widely accepted that education at a Buddhist Seminary or Academy (佛学院 foxueyuan) plays an important role in entering the ranks of leadership in contemporary Chinese Buddhism. Former research has investigated the creation of modern Buddhist seminaries in the twentieth century, their rise, decline and eventual resurgence, and their politicization. Early conceptions of an ideal education of a modern Buddhist clergy, albeit never fully implemented, still serve as a theoretical blueprint for Buddhist seminaries today. They were often shaped by modernization advocates and focused on the implementation of secular education and modern scientific research, including secular Buddhist studies. In the recent past, older generations of monastics have observed a decline in religious faith among seminary graduates. In addition to politicization, another secularizing influence stems from the adoption of critical scientific approaches and methods. But are the elder monastics right? Is there a decline in religious faith among younger, seminary-educated, generations of monastics? While this question is difficult, if not impossible, to answer conclusively, the present paper aims to serve as a starting point and a feasibility study. Based on a comparative examination of publications in traditional formats, with a focus on Buddhist journals, as well as online publications and social media posts, I attempt to trace the secularizing effect of seminary education on Buddhist elite discourse, manifested in a changing attitude towards the Buddhist scriptures and their tradition.

**Christian Meyer (Freie Universität Berlin)** – *Religious Experts at State Universities: Sino-Christian Studies Representatives as Public Spokespersons and their Role in International Academic Networks*

Religious elites in the PRC include not only religious personnel but also academics in the field of Religious Studies. In addition to religious personnel of the state-acknowledged religious associations (and non-acknowledged religious groups) they fulfill important functions in the religious landscape and in discourses on religions. This paper focuses on these other experts of religions – specializing in subfields such as Buddhist studies, Daoist studies, Christian and Islamic studies – who mostly sympathize with religions they do research about. It asks how they negotiate — or navigate between — their roles as professors at state universities, as spokespersons representing their traditions intellectually in China (and internationally), and individual experiences, interests and convictions.

Using examples from the field of Christian studies (sometimes also called Sino-Christian theology or SCT), the paper argues for their specific role in PRC discourses that fulfill functions that cannot be served by the religious experts trained at theological seminaries, in particular: • representing the respective religious tradition intellectually vis-à-vis the state, • making religion accessible publicly – not at least through the general book market and • in semi-public debates in the authoritarian system of the PRC in international academic networks. The paper will also discuss the problem that not only the received training, but also the fields of theology at seminaries and Christian studies at state universities appear clearly separated and reflect reasons why exchange between academics and religious leaders are so rare. Moreover, the important role of HK as an academic hub will be discussed.

**Amandine Péronnet (Inalco & Aix-Marseille Université)** – *From Educational Trajectories to Career Paths: Insights from the Lives of Three Buddhist Nun Leaders in Contemporary China*

In post-Mao Chinese Buddhism, completing a course of study at a Buddhist Academy (佛学院) has become a decisive step in shaping monastics' religious and administrative careers. Training in these state-recognized institutions provides doctrinal knowledge, monastic skills, and access to networks, political awareness, and symbolic capital that influence power dynamics and resource distribution among Buddhist elites. While often discussed in relation to monks, these academies have also trained generations of nuns, enabling them to pursue comparable avenues of advancement. Drawing on fieldwork conducted online and onsite since 2021, this paper examines the trajectories of three post-Mao Buddhist nun leaders—Masters Rurui, Xingkang, and Rumiao. Each graduated from a Buddhist Academy before becoming an abbess, presiding over an academy, or holding an executive position in the BAC (中国佛教协会). Their paths suggest that institutional education often precedes entry into the BAC hierarchy and constitutes a significant factor in securing politically-approved leadership positions. While these cases reveal commonalities between educational trajectories and career paths, contrasting examples emphasize that alternative routes to authority exist. I argue that academy training provides nuns with the administrative and ideological literacy needed to navigate the politico-religious system, and that it has become essential for participation in the Buddho-political elite of the PRC. Having attained influential positions, nuns are able to reinforce and reproduce the system, ensuring that future generations of Buddhist nuns gain greater access to authority.

**Katharina Wenzel-Teuber (China-Zentrum e.V., Sankt Augustin)** – *At Home and Abroad: Aspects of Chinese Catholic Career Paths*

This panel contribution examines the career paths of Catholic religious elites in China, focusing on the challenges they face after receiving education abroad. This must be understood against the background of administrative laws and other control mechanisms that regulate the formation of religious personnel and theological research within the PRC. Over the years, a significant number of Mainland Chinese Catholic priests, seminarians, sisters, and laypeople have received theological and philosophical education abroad, earning university degrees, including PhD titles. However, upon returning to China, these elites often encounter difficulties in applying their expertise. Priests and sisters, for instance, typically find it impossible to teach at Chinese universities, as theology is not part of the state-run curriculum. While some may find teaching positions at church-run seminaries, the number of Catholic theological institutions and students has declined in recent years, leading to reduced demand for faculty, although there remains a shortage of qualified instructors in critical areas such as psychology and human formation. As a result, many priests return to parish work, where their advanced training remains underutilized. Similarly, laypeople trained in theology abroad are generally limited to teaching subjects like philosophy, history, or languages at state universities. In some cases, priests, sisters, and laypeople choose to remain abroad within the Chinese diaspora, contributing to Chinese theology through research, publishing and networking. This situation underscores the disparity between international education and the limited career opportunities available within China's religious and political landscape.

**Qijun Zheng (Université Paris Sciences et Lettres)** – *Singing Nuns: the Revival of Quanzhen Daoism by Women in Contemporary China*

This paper contributes a Daoist case to the panel's comparative inquiry into how education and institutional affiliation shape elite careers in contemporary China. It analyzes how abbess Yin, converts autobiographical authority into policy discourse and institutional capital. Framed by devastation and post-Mao recovery, Qianyuan Temple's (乾元觀 at Mount Maoshan 茅山, Jiangsu Province) resurgence is examined through three linked fields of elite formation: (1) education and curricular production; (2) affiliations with state-recognized bodies; and (3) performative authority. First, Yin couples formal study and clerical training with the codification of liturgical music, standardized chant books, and study circles, building a reproducible curriculum that professionalizes female clergy and supplies successors. Second, she occupies sites of institutional legitimacy by publishing in officially sanctioned

venues, frequently invoking “Sinicization,” “adaptation to socialist society,” and “love country, love religion,” and petitioning for a provincial Daoist college, aligning temple development with policy expectations and resource channels. Third, by elevating ritual voice as embodied pedagogy, she converts aesthetic competence into symbolic capital that authorizes participation in governance and counters pressures toward commercial tourism. This case clarifies how Daoist female elites assemble careers through interlocking educational trajectories and affiliations that run parallel to Buddhist models yet remain distinct in their reliance on performance-centered formation. It argues that hearing women’s voices in liturgy and publications expands their figurative voice in leadership, refining comparative theories of elite making across Chinese religions.

[638] David Schaberg (University of California, Los Angeles), Paul Napier (University of Oxford), Markus Samuel Haselbeck (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), Paul Fahr (Ruhr University Bochum), Michael Schimmelpfennig (Australian National University - Canberra), Marco Pouget (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich), Joachim Gentz (University of Edinburgh), Federico Valenti (Tallinn University) and Tobias Zürn (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology). *Texts that Teach: Commentary, Learning, and the Hermeneutics of Instruction in Early China.*

**Abstract.** This panel investigates commentary as a central medium of learning in early and early imperial China, exploring how exegetical practices shaped literacy, pedagogy, and the formation of the classical canon. Commentary was not merely a tool for clarifying inherited texts, but a dynamic intellectual arena in which scholars transmitted knowledge, articulated interpretive positions, and oriented readers within evolving cultural worlds. Drawing on sources from the Warring States to the early medieval period, the papers analyse how commentarial techniques, from glosses and paraphrases to illustrative traditions and ritual exegesis, mediated access to the Classics and other authoritative texts. A recurring concern is the didactic function of commentary. Several contributions examine the tension between elucidating genuinely obscure passages and reiterating material that appears self-evident. This tension, we argue, reveals commentary as an instrument of stabilisation and canonisation, a means of regulating how texts were to be read, understood, and taught. Whether through systematic sentence-by-sentence exegesis, polemical persuasion, appeals to lineage history, or visual and lexical strategies, commentators crafted pedagogical pathways that reflected both their intellectual commitments and the educational needs of their audiences. By juxtaposing studies on diverse genres including the Documents, the Annals, the Odes, but also the Erya, apocryphal texts, and late zhangju commentaries, the panel demonstrates that commentary functioned as a privileged space where interpretation, instruction, and authority converged. It aims to illuminate how scholars not only explained the Classics but also reshaped them, transforming commentary into a powerful vehicle for transmitting knowledge and cultivating successive generations of readers.

**Keywords:** Commentary Tradition, Education and Pedagogy, Lexicography and Glossing Practices, Textual Transmission, Philology, Canon Formation

**David Schaberg (UCLA)** – *Jisun Lineage History in the Rise and Canonisation of the Confucius Circle*

One way to approach the Chunqiu and its commentaries, as well as Guoyu and the many other Warring States and Han texts that include historical narratives relating to the courts of the Chunqiu period, is through their representations of the multigenerational histories of the aristocratic lineages that populated these courts. Such representations, some legitimising, some derogatory, capture the range of uses to which lineage history was put and hint at the types of sources from which such texts as Zuozhuan were compiled. This presentation treats the Jisun lineage of Lu as a case study in the uses of lineage history. Accounts of the earliest Jisun heads tend to be exculpatory or celebratory, while for mid-Chunqiu heads the critical perspectives focalised through competing Lu lineages dominate. For Ji Huanzi (d. 492) and Ji Kangzi (d. 468), representations of the lineage in all Warring States and Han texts adopt perspectives of the Confucius circle. Despite the dependence of that circle on Jisun patronage and employment, these perspectives are overwhelmingly critical, turning the lineage into a foil for the articulation of moral and political principles. By the late second century BCE, demonisation of the Jisun lineage furnishes a Five Phase-theory-based pretext for the extrajudicial slaughter of supposed Huainan adherents. Jisun lineage history thus served the purposes of the lineage itself, of its contemporary rivals, of a nascent philosophical movement, and of a later political court.

**Paul Napier (Oxford University)** – *Between the Ancestral Temple and the Altars of Soil and Grain: “Specialists” of “Substance” (zhì 質) and “Refinement” (wén 文) in He Xiu’s “Apocryphal” Gongyang Exegesis*

When He Xiu 何休 (129–182) composed his famous Explanatory Glosses (jiěgǔ 解詁), he was drawing on centuries of hermeneutic tradition to produce what purported to be a faithful “explication” of the core ideas implicit in the

text of the Gongyang Commentary. Yet in so doing, he had developed—surreptitiously, as it were—a profoundly original form of textual exegesis shaped by his own peculiar ideological battles, philosophical ambitions, and historical milieu. He's interpretive originality can be traced in part to a sustained engagement with Han-era "apocryphal" texts (chènwěi 讖緯), a body of classicist literature characterised by persistent pre-occupations with cosmological system-building, speculative prognostication, and historical millenarianism. Proscribed as heterodox after the Han and transmitted in frustratingly fragmentary form, the "apocrypha" formed a bedrock of classicist discourse throughout the Eastern Han. This paper seeks to elucidate He's puzzling references to "specialists of substance" (zhìjīa 質家) and "specialists of refinement" (wénjīa 文家) by situating them within the context of Eastern Han "apocryphal" classicism. From here, it argues that zhijia and wenjia most likely represented a professionalised class of ritual "specialists" by the 2nd century CE. Operating within institutional structures endemic to the Eastern Han, the emergence of these "specialists" reflected broader transformations in the culture and politics of the age. He's invocation of them not only lent institutional legitimacy to his exegetical innovations, it reflected the intricate interplay between textual hermeneutics and evolving ritual order in late-Han China.

**Markus Samuel Haselbeck (KU Leuven)** – *Some Traditions Have Shortcomings! Commentaries as Tools for Didactic Persuasion*

Early on, the Chunqiu 春秋 (Spring and Autum Annals) with its various traditions (zhuan 傳) advocating for vastly differing viewpoints posed a problem for students of the Classics: Which tradition should be followed? Instead of expecting students to blindly follow their views, at least some teachers didactically persuaded their students to understand and accept their positions. Commentaries sometimes still contain traces of such arguments painting a picture quite contrary to views of this exegetical genre as carrier of philological neutrality—the hard-earned results of an author's study of a text and its truthful understanding. Especially He Xiu's 何休 (129–182) three fragmentary commentaries entitled Gongyang moshou 公羊墨守 (Defences of the Gongyang Written in Ink), Guliang feiji 穀梁廢疾 (Crippling Disease of the Guliang), and Zuoshi gaohuang 左氏膏肓 (Incurability of Mister Zuo) visualise such persuasive argumentation: Each text voices its author's opinions in favour or disapproval of one of the three surviving traditions to the Annals. Neutral philological treatment is entirely absent in He's three commentaries. This paper analyses select passages from He Xiu's three commentaries as didactic texts written for his students. While emphasis lies on his stylistic toolkit, employed to persuade his audience, later examples show how these texts similarly facilitated critical thinking within the boundaries of the tradition. Ultimately, this demonstrates how early commentaries are not only didactic in an explanatory manner but can lead their audience to accept the author's opinions.

**Paul Fahr (Ruhr University Bochum)** – *From Servant to Savior? The Representation of Yao, Shun, and Yu in Early Commentaries on Shangshu and other Texts*

Commentaries are commonly considered a means of explicating another text, that is, as a subordinate kind of writing. Yet, upon closer inspection, many commentaries are driven by their own agenda. Commentators not only seek to render intelligible what has been written by others. They also intervene in contemporaneous debates and adapt older texts to present purposes. This results in passages in the commentary that provide more information than is necessary for understanding the primary text, or that solve problems that the latter does not pose at all. In early imperial China, we find this, for example, with regard to Yao, Shun, and Yu and the legends concerning the transfer of power between them. These purported events were crucial to the political culture of the time. Therefore, authors discussed fundamental issues concerning rulership and government by commenting on these rulers. It is against this background that commentators of the Shangshu ("Venerated Documents") and other texts wrote their annotations. Many of these commentaries have only been transmitted in fragments. Still, what is left of them allows for studying some of the more general problems and questions that concerned their authors. The paper discusses selected passages on Yao, Shun, and Yu in commentaries on Shangshu and other early texts. I argue that these commentaries and their reception need to be considered in light of pressing questions, e.g., concerning abdication. By engaging with the classical models, commentaries adapt this institution to their times and interpret it according to contemporary needs.

**Michael Schimmelpfennig (Australian National University, Canberra)** – *Didactic Purposes – for Whom? The Educational Functions and Target Audiences of Section and Sentence Commentaries 章句 of the 2nd Century CE*

References to Section and Sentence Commentaries (SSCs) in the Dynastic Histories of the Han Dynasty often indicate their educational purpose. Aside from establishing and authorising certain readings of canonical and other texts, SSCs served as teaching aids for princes and members of the imperial court, as well as for students of erudite authors of SSCs. Although their appearance can differ significantly depending on the type of accompanying main

text, their systematic approach of explaining each sentence of a text with a sequence of glosses and paraphrases as well as explanations of the meaning of sections clearly indicates their didactic purpose. However, it was probably their didactic approach that immediately made them a target for those who criticised their verbosity. Criticisms like the claim that 10.000 characters are needed to explain four characters of the Shangshu (Venerated Documents) are possibly exaggerated but reports like Huan Rong's Shangshu zhangju being shortened from 400.000 to 230.000 characters seem plausible. Today, apart from numerous fragments, only three commentaries labelled as SSCs survive: Heshang Gong's Daodejing zhangju, Wang Yi's Chuci zhangju, and Zhao Qi's Mengzi zhangju. Dating suggests that the three commentators wrote their works between approximately 120 and 160 CE, a time when such commentaries were no longer considered useful tools. This raises the question why their commentators nevertheless chose the zhangju format? Who were their target audiences? Did these target audiences require changes in their didactic approaches? And does the analysis of didactic techniques represent a more sophisticated method for differentiating the genre?

**Marco Pouget (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich)** – *The Classics as Teachers, Teaching the Classics: Commentary as a Didactic Instrument in Early Imperial China*

As mediators between a later audience and a corpus of wisdom texts enshrouded in the mists of archaic history and sage mystique, early imperial Chinese commentaries to the Ru 儒 Classics were inherently didactic materials. Generations of scholars received an education in the Classics with guidance by preceding commentators, affording them great authority and an enduring intellectual legacy. To capitalise on the hermeneutic thought of classical commentators, it is thus crucial to consider their didactic agendas, which shaped both commentarial expression and (re)-formulation of textual meaning. Seeking to better understand how authors such as Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200 CE) sought to effectively communicate their readings to their audiences, this presentation observes commentarial practices geared at unravelling classical wisdom to learners, both about the texts and contained within the texts. I argue that commentators adhered to observable principles to enhance the intelligibility and convincingness of their writings. Distinguishing these allows for an analysis of commentaries' didactic function for a considerable portion of their target groups, based on the prior knowledge that commentators tacitly assumed and their priorities of emphasis. I conclude that commentary-writing may have been in part designed to cater to the requirements of learners receiving an education in the classics through commentaries, as well as studying commentaries for their own sake. The didactic functions of commentary thus informed debates around the exegetical and political dimensions of classical scholarship, allowing to situate commentary as a foundational mode of discourse in the textual community of early imperial China.

**Joachim Gentz (University of Edinburgh)** – *Becoming Well Acquainted with the Names of Birds, Beasts, and Plants: The Didactics of Illustrative Commentaries to the Shijing and Erya*

Confucius' saying in Lunyu 17.9 that one of the reasons the Poetry should be studied is "to become well acquainted with the names of birds, beasts, and plants" 多識於鳥獸草木之名 is unique among all the various purposes listed in early Chinese texts to explain why a Confucian classic should be studied. This peculiar statement has inspired rather distinctive exegetical methods in Poetry commentaries that take a very different didactic approach to teaching their readers the classics, often using visual means in addition to their explanations. The paper starts with a discussion on different forms of visual commentaries and their implicit exegetical purposes and methodologies. It then proceeds to focus on those particular traditions of visual commentaries on the Poetry and Erya that most likely follow the peculiar Confucius' statement in Lunyu 17.9 such as Wei Xie's 衛協 Illustrated Mao Poetry 毛詩圖 from 323-325 CE and Guo Pu's 郭璞 (276–324 CE) Illustrated Erya 爾雅圖. Surveying the existing descriptions of Tang illustrations of the Poetry and Erya as well as extant examples of later visual commentaries on the Poetry and Erya, the paper discusses the relationship between these and the earlier visual commentaries that are no longer extant. It will conclude by discussing possible interconnections of the visual commentaries' tradition with the genre of illustrated Materia Medica 本草圖 that began to emerge around the time of the Sui dynasty (581–618).

**Federico Valenti (Tallinn University)** – *Explaining the Obvious and Admitting the Obscure: Guo Pu's Didactic Strategies in the Erya zhu 爾雅注*

Guo Pu's (276–324 CE) fourth-century commentary on the Erya, China's earliest extant glossary used to access the Classics, offers a clear view of commentary as a didactic tool. Classified in the Yiwen zhi under the Filial Piety rubric but later associated with Lesser Learning (xiao xue) and Exegesis (xungu), the Erya furnished the lexical foundations of classical study yet remained curt and uneven. In the preface transmitted with his commentary, Guo Pu presents a programme of correction and completion, collating earlier explanations, comparing regional speech and popular usage, and sometimes supplying pronunciation guidance through new glosses. He reports long and sustained

engagement with the text and a resolve to remove errors and omissions. Guo Pu's notes sometimes "spell out" the apparent sense, or explicitly decline to gloss certain entries, remarking that "the rest are in common usage" and require no further explanation. Conversely, for a few perplexing words he admits weixiang "not clear," acknowledging the limits of received knowledge. By analysing Guo Pu's choices, this talk argues that even seemingly redundant commentary served a purpose in canonising and stabilising interpretation. His strategic use of explicit glosses and frank omissions allowed him to inscribe intellectual authority within the tradition while fostering a guided reading experience. Close readings of selected entries shows how early Chinese exegetes balanced innovation with preservation, using the format of commentary as a dynamic educational space to both clarify and reassert textual authority, transforming the Erya into a renewed instrument of literacy and canonical instruction.

[639] Yim Fong Chan (University of Macau). *A Twisted Soul in Modern Confucianism: Feng Youlan in the 1960s.*

**Abstract.** Based on his writings from the 1950s, Feng Youlan appeared to accept the CCP's promotion of Marxism as a "scientific authority" after the establishment of the PRC. Motivated by his concern for China's modernization in the field of Chinese philosophy, Feng pursued two major goals during this period: applying the Marxist approach to the study of ancient Chinese philosophy and ensuring the continuity and relevance of the Chinese philosophical tradition in the modern era. Following a series of self-criticisms in the late 1950s, Feng began exploring interpretative space for Confucianism in the early 1960s, when the political atmosphere was relatively relaxed. This paper adopts a sociological approach to examine how Feng responded to the prevailing negative evaluations of Confucian thought at the time. In particular, it compares different versions of A History of Chinese Philosophy published by Feng and his colleagues during this period and analyzes his debates with other philosophy scholars on Confucius' concept of ren. Through these debates, this paper demonstrates how Feng gradually made concessions, ultimately leading him to revise A New History of Chinese Philosophy just two years after its publication. This paper argues that, in doing so, Feng underwent a process of self-negation and self-deception, leading to his transformation into what I describe as a "twisted soul." This state of twistedness arose from his struggle to reconcile the incompatibilities between Confucianism and Marxism, reflecting the tensions within modern Confucianism under political pressure.

**Keywords:** Modern Confucianism, Marxism, Modernization, Feng Youlan

[641] Lingman Li (Music Museum of Xinghai Conservator). *Exporting the Stage: The Production and Reception of Qing Dynasty Opera Paintings in Sino-Western Trade.*

**Abstract.** Chinese export paintings of opera scenes, produced in 18th and 19th-century Guangzhou, represent a significant visual archive of Sino-Western exchange. This study investigates why theatrical themes became a dominant genre within this trade art, moving beyond their classification as mere souvenirs. It highlights the agency of Guangzhou Hong merchants, who utilized private opera troupes for diplomatic entertainment. This direct exposure compelled Western traders—exemplified by the British East India Company's 1805 commission of 36 opera paintings—to document these ephemeral performances. Furthermore, the study situates this production within the European context of "Chinoiserie" and the Enlightenment interest in plays like The Orphan of Zhao. The paintings thus catered to a specific Western curiosity about Chinese moral narratives and performance practices, such as cross-dressing actors. Ultimately, the article argues that these works functioned as complex cultural mediators. By synthesizing Chinese social reality with Western demand, they offer critical insights into the transcultural construction of knowledge and the visual consumption of the "Orient" during the Qing Dynasty.

**Keywords:** Cross-cultural Representation, Performing Arts in Qing Society, Visual Culture of the Canton Trade

[644] Zhuo Niu (Freie Universität Berlin). *Post-Pandemic Border Regime(s) on the China–Myanmar Frontier: An Ethnographic Study in Ruili, Yunnan.*

**Abstract.** Border closures were a global strategy to contain COVID-19, yet their effects have persisted beyond the pandemic, often intertwining with geopolitical tensions and reshaping everyday life in border regions. This paper examines these dynamics through an ethnographic study of Ruili, Yunnan Province, which is the largest land port between China and Myanmar. Once a relatively porous and socially interconnected borderland, Ruili has been transformed into a heavily fortified space, a shift accelerated during the pandemic through the construction of a thousand-mile border wall between the two countries as part of China's biomedical approach to pandemic mitigation.

Such border transformations also intersect with the fragmentation of the Myanmar state following the 2021

military coup, which triggered armed conflicts and displaced large numbers of Myanmar nationals seeking safety and work opportunities across the border. Against this backdrop, the paper investigates the following questions: How have COVID-era border control policies and technologies evolved in the post-pandemic period? How do Ruili residents and Myanmar migrants navigate the post-pandemic border regime? What motivations, emotions, and narratives of hope shape their cross-border practices under tightening restrictions?
The paper concludes that borders, far from static lines, remain dynamic sociopolitical assemblages whose transformations profoundly shape the lives of those who inhabit and traverse them. Meanwhile, rather than producing stability, heightened border governance has generated new forms of disorder, illicitness, and friction between state imaginaries of the border and the lived realities of borderland communities.
**Keywords:** China-Myanmar border, Post-pandemic era, Border Transformation(s), Border porosity, China, Myanmar

[648] Fan Wang (The University of Hong Kong). *Negotiating Self-Exploration and Modern Anxiety: The Gap Year in China from Cultural Translation to the Tradition and Philosophy of Wenren youli (文人游历).*
**Abstract.** The gap year, originally a Western concept, has experienced a distinct trajectory in its travel to East Asia. In China, it is usually regarded as a courageous rebellion against social expectations, while its practice frequently becomes highly instrumental. A cultural translation perspective first illuminates how its meaning has been reshaped by local values and a hyper-competitive social structure, revealing tension between young people's desire for self-exploration and the pervasive anxiety of "falling behind." However, most research approaches the gap year through contemporary Western frameworks, leaving its reinterpretation via Chinese historical and philosophical traditions largely unexplored. Focusing on the historical dimension of cultural translation, this study then reexamines the gap year's orientation toward self-exploration through the lens of traditional Chinese cultural practice.
It argues that the modern Chinese gap year should be understood beyond a Western import, as a site of resonance with the long-standing tradition of wenren youli (文人游历), a practice with deep roots in Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism through which literati explored, experienced, and internalized the world. By integrating thematic analysis of Chinese youths' social media posts with insights from classical literature, it examines the internal dialogue between the contemporary translated hybridity and traditional wenren youli culture, reflected in negotiations of self-exploration amid societal anxiety.
While often criticized as "rebellious," "over-Westernized," or "unorthodox," gap-year practices in China may unconsciously reveal traditional cultural and philosophical values overshadowed in today's utilitarian society. This perspective offers new insights into youth decision-making, wellbeing and educational expectations in contemporary China.
**Keywords:** Gap year, Cultural translation, Wenren youli (文人游历), Youth self-exploration, Chinese philosophy

[652] Kelly Ngo (University of Wales Trinity Saint David), Anthony DeBlasi (University at Albany, State University of New York) and Mingkay Poon (Chinese University of Hong Kong). *Memorials and mirrors: Political advice literature of Tang dynasty China.*
**Abstract.** Surviving remonstrances of premodern China are documented by political advice literature in the forms of memorial writings to the throne and 'mirrors for princes' texts that were read by reigning and aspiring rulers. Studies to date have concentrated primarily on remonstrances from the Spring and Autumn period (770– 453 BCE) through the early imperial times with relatively less attention on later periods in Chinese history. Reading between the lines of advice, instruction, protest, and criticism in historical remonstrances illuminates resources in the memorials and mirrors for understanding the power dynamics that shaped interactions and relationships between the educated elite vis-à-vis the rulers of medieval China. Engaging both memorials and mirrors, this panel explores three perspectives in the deployment of advice rhetoric during the Tang dynasty (618–907). Beyond communicating to and about the emperor, the formal articulations of advice reflect insights into the advisers themselves, including their deep concern with their own role, as well as their bureaucratic mission. Remonstration has also played a significant role in the education of heirs to the throne. As imperial heirlooms, mirror texts compiled for the guidance of one ruler also functioned to preserve and sustain the ruling house by transmitting the arts of governance from the incumbent ruler to their successor, as exemplified by the early Tang mirror – the Qunshu zhiyao. Examining the temporal structures of narrative tropes in the Qunshu zhiyao, the interplay between historicity and timelessness offer insight into how the mirror text engenders self-reflection within the imperial consumption of literature.
**Keywords:** Tang dynasty, remonstrance, mirror for princes, political advice literature, Qunshu zhiyao

**Anthony DeBlasi (University at Albany, State University of New York)** – *Advice to Emperors as Self-Definition: Solidifying the Bureaucratic Mission in Tang China*

As recent scholarship by Hilde De Weerdt and others has demonstrated, Tang dynasty officials continued the long tradition of encouraging emperors to behave in ways that aligned with ideals established in antiquity. The surviving record suggests that this was not just a performative activity but was responding to the particular social environment of the period and the Tang state's evolving bureaucratic culture. More specifically, descriptions of ideal rulership necessarily implied criteria for judging the officials who served the emperors. That both emperors and officials felt the need to comment on the obligations of officials indicates this was a contentious topic. The proposed paper will examine the ways in which advice to emperors represented an indirect way of articulating an ideal of the serving official. The paper starts from the premise that as the elite became ever more identified with bureaucratic service, it became necessary to define the character of the bureaucrat to create a sense of solidarity in the service and potentially constrain the autonomy of emperors in selecting their closest advisors. After an initial discussion of the efforts of early Tang emperors to define the ruler-minister relationship, the paper concentrates on examples of mid-eighth to early ninth century remonstrations concerning imperial dependence on men seen as incompatible with the emerging sense of the proper bureaucratic mission.

**Ming-kay Poon (CUHK)** – *Imperial Heirlooms for Statecraft: The Educational Significance of the Qunshu Zhiyao*

Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty commissioned Wei Zheng and other scholars to compile the Qunshu Zhiyao (Essentials of governance from diverse books), a work that systematically extracts essential principles of statecraft from classical texts to serve as a reference for rulers. The intended readership consisted primarily of the emperor and imperial family members, with historical records indicating both Taizong and his successor Xuanzong actively promoting its study among crown princes and various princes. This practice underscored the work's significant role in cultivating future rulers. As a comprehensive guide to governance, the compilation meticulously incorporates excerpts from historical texts, each carefully selected to demonstrate core principles of administration and leadership. This study examines a representative selection of these historical excerpts, analyzing the specific rationale behind their inclusion and how they functioned as effective instructional materials on statecraft. The compilers approached historical texts as a mirror for contemporary governance, believing that understanding past precedents would enable rulers to avoid repeating errors while drawing upon accumulated wisdom of ancient sages. Furthermore, the Qunshu Zhiyao serves as a manual of remonstrance, preserving crucial dialogues where virtuous ministers counsel their rulers, thus emphasizing the importance of accepting ministerial advice in effective governance. Through detailed analysis of selected cases, this article illustrates how these interconnected dimensions—historical reference, moral instruction, and remonstrance practice—collectively established the Qunshu Zhiyao as a sophisticated educational instrument specifically designed for imperial formation, transcending its basic function as a mere anthology to become a purposeful tool for cultivating effective rulers.

**Kelly Ngo (University of Wales Trinity Saint David)** – *Tale as old as time: Narrative tropes in an early Tang dynasty mirror for princes*

Designed to educate rulers in cultivating ethical character and achieving sociopolitical order, the mirrors for princes tradition in China originated in the seventh century (McMullen & De Weerdt, 2020). These mirror texts ('mirrors') were read by rulers, princes, officials, and commoners alike, with many becoming foundational references in East Asian political thought (Ngo, 2024). Originally produced for incumbent and incoming rulers, the mirror genre connected their readers to generations of leaders and advisers throughout Chinese history, enabling them to learn from a curated heritage of collective experience articulated through exemplars, narratives, and advices. Scholars have noted a tension between the invariability and movement of time in mirrors from the Latin West, Byzantium and medieval Islamic world (Marlow 2023, p. 343; Perret & Pequignot, 2023, p. 5). This paper argues that the interplay between timelessness and historical authority functions as a critical tool in the Tang dynasty mirror Qunshu zhiyao 群書治要. Commissioned by Emperor Taizong (r. 624–649) for his reference, this anthology compiles excerpts from sixty-eight canonical, historical, and masters sources. The paper examines the tension between historicity and the timelessness of historical lesson through the excerpted nature of selected texts and their reconfiguration within the anthology, analysing narrative tropes drawn from sources of various intellectual and ideological traditions. It thus argues that the reader's self-reflection is fostered through the creative engagement with temporal structure and historical consciousness embedded in the Qunshu zhiyao.

[654] Hannah Rørbæk Hørby (Aarhus University). *'So Pretty, So Beautiful' – Understanding the Chinese Baihe Novel Genre Through the Eyes of the Readers.*

**Abstract.** Baihe novels, often seen as the counterpart to Danmei novels as they explore romantic and/or sexual

sapphic relationships, have been a consistent part of the Chinese online literature ecosystem, but rarely gained much attention from neither state media nor academic researchers. However, whereas the majority of Danmei readers are themselves heterosexual female-identifying, the Baihe community presents a much different demography, with many different rationales for engaging with the sapphic material and perspectives on the stories appeal. Through Reflexive Thematic Analysis of online interviews with Baihe readers, I construct four themes for describing the genre through the readers' eyes, to explore how Baihe novels are digested and interpreted by its audience. The stories offer narratives where emotions are given primary attention in the romantic development and reflects contemporary feministic influences. Moreover, they also act as an eyeopener for reader's exploration of their own sexuality, with attention drawn to the beauty of female relationships, and while distinctly not reflective of the real Chinese sapphic experience, they still presenting a moderately believable ideal reality to draw inspiration and hope from. The fundamental sapphic, feministic and Chinese nature of the novels offers a new model of Chinese lesbian novel writing and opens up for a deeper understanding of the genre and community as a whole.
**Keywords:** Baihe, Girls love, Sapphic relationships, Online literature, Chinese queer media, Feminism, Sexual identity, 'Girls helping girls'

[658] Nan Ni (SOAS, University of London), Xiao Lin (SOAS, University of London), Gregor Weimar (Monumenta Serica Institute) and Siping Shan (Peking University). *Manchu as Medium and Method in Qing Thought and Knowledge Production.*

**Abstract.** This panel explores the rich diversity of Manchu-language texts across genres, time, and ideological functions, offering new insight on the role of Manchu as a medium of knowledge production in the Qing empire. Spanning the early to late Qing period, the papers collectively examine a wide range of textual forms—from religious translations and philosophical classics to imperial records and intelligence reports—covering both theological and secular domains. Together, they demonstrate that Manchu remained an intellectually and administratively vital language well into the nineteenth century.
The first paper analyses Catholic and Protestant Bible translations into Manchu, focused on divergent editorial strategies and theological priorities and highlighting the continued relevance of Manchu literacy for religious instruction. The second offers a comparative study of three Manchu versions of the Daodejing, investigating translation techniques and lexical variation to elucidate how Qing translators interpreted Han philosophical texts for divergent Manchu readerships. The third examines a late-Qing intelligence report on a Mongol distillery, shedding light on the mechanisms of imperial surveillance and frontier governance. The final paper explores how Japan was ideologically positioned in official Manchu documents, exposing the Qing intellectuals' Sinocentric worldview and the textual construction of East Asian hierarchies.
The contributions of our panel emphasise the adaptability of Manchu textual practices and their role in shaping Qing epistemologies. The panel calls for a re-evaluation of Manchu as a dynamic linguistic medium of empire, showing how textual practices both reflected and shaped changing conceptions of authority, identity, and cultural translation in the Qing universe.
**Keywords:** Manchu Language, Manchu Literature, Qing History

**Gregor Weimar (Monumenta Serica Institute)** – *The Manchu Bible Translation by Louis de Poirot: Parallels and Differences Compared with Protestant Manchu Translations*

The use of spoken Manchu is said to have declined in Qing China from the 18th century. However, the efforts in Manchu-language Bible translation by Ex-Jesuit and Qing court official Louis de Poirot (1735–1813) and Protestant translators Stepan Lipovtsov (1770–1841) and George Borrow (1803–1881) suggest that there was still a significant number of Manchu readers at that time. This paper examines Poirot's Manchu terminology and the editing of his Manchu Bible in comparison with later Protestant translations. It reveals that Poirot's modifications were aimed at catechetical instruction after Catholic clergy would have disappeared from China in the early 19th century. Poirot adapted Western editorial tools such as footnotes and underlining to suit the Manchu script. He used Manchu syllables as footnote markers and varied font sizes to distinguish the main text from annotations. Underlines became vertical lines, categorized as one line for personal names, two for place names and foreign concepts, and three for heretical content. Poirot's terminology was predominantly descriptive, avoiding transliterations from Latin, Greek, or Hebrew, and explaining foreign terms in annotations when necessary. The two Protestant versions of 1822 and 1835, respectively, used loan words and were translated from Luther's Bible. The absence of annotations or visual aids indicates, as opposed to Poirot's version, that they were meant to be used in the presence of Protestant missionaries. These texts also give evidence to the importance of personal Bible reading, rather than

studying the annotations.

**Nan Ni (SOAS University of London)** – *Bridging Words and Worlds: The Daodejing in Manchu Translation*

The earliest known record of a Manchu translation of the Daodejing dates to 1656, during the reign of the Shunzhi Emperor. Despite the Daodejing being one of the most widely translated and studied texts in Chinese literature, its Manchu versions remain remarkably rare, and scholarly attention to them has been limited. To date, there are three relatively complete Manchu versions of the text attested. The first is a romanised transcription by Erwin von Zach, although the provenance of his source remains unclear. The second, preserved in St Petersburg, presents a markedly different translation from von Zach's version. The third is held in the National Library of China in Beijing and differs again in grammatical structure and lexical choices.

This paper offers a comparative analysis of these three versions, focusing on differences in grammar and lexicon. Drawing on Manchu etymology, it investigates why translators selected particular Manchu terms for corresponding Chinese concepts. Furthermore, the study examines the translation strategies employed and what these choices reveal about the translators' interpretations of Chinese philosophical ideas and their efforts to render them intelligible to a Manchu readership. Finally, through an exploration of relevant archival materials, this paper seeks to contextualise the translations historically—considering what motivated their production, how they were undertaken, and how they were received. The study aims to shed light on a specific angle of cultural transmission in Qing China and to address unresolved questions surrounding the Manchu Daodejing.

**Elizabeth Xiao Lin (SOAS University of London)** – *Constructing Japan in the Qing Archive: Manchu-Language Perceptions and Imperial Ideology*

This paper examines how Japan was constructed in official Manchu-language documents of the Qing dynasty, including imperial memorials, tribute illustrations, and diplomatic records. Rather than merely documenting external affairs, these sources actively shaped a vision of Japan that reinforced Qing ideological centrality within East Asia. Far from offering an accurate portrayal, they reflected a Sinocentric worldview in which Japan was persistently positioned as culturally subordinate and politically peripheral.

By tracing shifts in terminology and depiction across the early and mid-Qing periods—such as the repeated use of aiman, we dzi and we dzi hvlha to describe Japan as both uncivilized and threatening—the study reveals how imperial knowledge production projected an imagined regional hierarchy in which Qing supremacy remained unquestioned. These rhetorical patterns exemplify how textual representations were embedded in a broader symbolic order that upheld the Hua–Yi distinction. The paper concludes by reflecting on the epistemic rupture following the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), when the stark contrast between archival representations and Japan's modern power exposed the limitations of Qing diplomatic cognition. The Manchu-language archive thus offers a revealing lens into imperial ideology and its eventual destabilization amid a shifting East Asian order.

[659] Fong Fong Chen (Hong Kong Baptist University), Lanzhou Luo (Fudan University), Rachel Taylor-Goh (née Chua) (London School of Economics), Sofia Bollo (University of Zurich), Zhu Yi (Lingnan University), Pelin Peiyi Lyu (Zhejiang University) and Giovanna Puppin (University of Genoa). *Unfolding Museum Landscapes in China.*

**Abstract.** The museum landscape in China represents a multifaceted reality, shaped by diverse factors and reflecting a multitude of elements: the country's long history, its vast material and immaterial heritage, and its political mission to build national confidence and excel in the global cultural scene. Museums serve as dynamic spaces where history is preserved, interpreted, remembered and forgotten. Museums shape narratives, influence national and local identities, and can serve political and economic functions. By contrast, independent museums or alternative personalities sometimes offer other perspectives, occasionally challenging official histories. Beyond their role as cultural and historical institutions, Chinese museums are pioneers in technological innovation. Digital exhibitions and new approaches to audience engagement are transforming how visitors experience history and culture. The cultural heritage commercialisation is very popular among citizens, helping to simultaneously revitalise cultural heritage, evoke collective nostalgia, and emanate soft power. Substantial investments in the construction and modernisation of museums to increase their appeal underscore multiple aims: preserving the nation's heritage, legitimising the state power, forging cultural identity, imparting patriotic education, boosting both domestic cultural tourism, and increasing China's international influence.

This panel will offer a multidisciplinary overview of the evolving museum landscape in China. It starts with contributions on the historical analysis of the emergence of museums in China, revealing new actors in the formation of China's museology, then discusses specific cases of contemporary museum practices, and examines questions of authenticity and replication, past and present, unity and continuity, digital and physical,

aestheticisation and commercialisation. This panel highlights the increasingly significant role of museums in China's current cultural, political and socio-economic strategies. This panel clarifies how museum practices in China continuously intersect with broader political, cultural, and social narratives about national rejuvenation, stretching to the present era of economic neoliberalism, cultural diplomacy and a booming heritage industry.
**Keywords:** Museums in China, Chinese Museology, History of Museums, Archaeology in Museums, National Heritage, Cultural Identity, Heritage Commercialization, Cultural Confidence

**Fong Fong Chen (Hong Kong Baptist University)** – *Envisioning Transnational Exhibiting Cultures in Early Twentieth-Century China: Zhang Jian and His Visionary Museum Endeavors*
Scholars have examined the Nantong Museum and the Nanyang Exposition as significant milestones in the history of museums and exhibitions in China. Established in 1905 in Jiangsu province, the Nantong Museum was the first Chinese-sponsored museum, while the Nanyang Exposition, organized in 1910 in Nanjing, marked China's inaugural World's Fair. Both institutions are closely associated with Zhang Jian (1853-1926), an urban reformist who spent 70 days observing Japan's modernization in 1903. This paper begins by exploring the perspectives of late Qing elites on museums and exhibitions within the context of transnational cultural exchanges. It specifically addresses Zhang Jian's vision for establishing museums in China, which corresponded with his educational and industrial aspirations. In the late 20th century, the acronym "GLAM" was introduced to denote galleries, libraries, archives, and museums. Historical developments indicate that, as early as the early 20th century, exhibition spaces included not only venues for displaying artifacts but also botanical gardens and libraries, providing valuable insights into the classification of modern museums. This paper investigates the emergence of museums in China and emphasizes Zhang Jian's innovative efforts to create exhibition complexes that integrate Chinese traditions with international influences, thereby showcasing his forward-thinking perspective on art and cultural institutions.
**Lanzhou Luo (Fudan University)** – *Zeng Zhaoyu, Nanjing Museum and the Politics of Museums in early Mao-era China*
This paper will discuss the founding and development of the Nanjing Museum in the early People's Republic of China (PRC), and the role within this process of Zeng Zhaoyu 曾昭燏 (1909-1964), its Vice-Director (from 1950) and then Director (from 1955 until 1964). The topic illuminates important aspects of the history and practice of Chinese archaeology: the planning and establishment of an important museum in the early years of the Mao era, and the role played by Zeng Zhaoyu, one of the few women to become prominent figures in modern Chinese archaeology before the 21st century. Through examining the way that Zeng worked as both a politician and an archaeologist and museologist, the chapter will highlight the interactions between political and archaeological/museological practice, and the ways in which Zeng's background, personality and gender shaped her work and how others perceived and responded to her. This presentation cannot resolve the culminating mystery of Zeng's life – the reason for her suicide in 1964. However, it has sought to analyse her career and how successful she was in completing her various projects. This analysis, in turn, casts light on the political contexts of museum work in the early PRC. The displays at the Nanjing Museum under Zeng's supervision shifted in focus from big, ideologically informed narratives about the nation-state, to more careful, granular excavations of local culture. This process of narrowing scope did not imply Zeng was incapable of dealing with grand narratives of national significance, but rather testified to her commitment to granular academic rigour, and to communicating academic discoveries to local communities in the southeast. Although Zeng, tragically, did not survive the Mao era, her commitment to dissemination of Jiangsu, provincial artefacts can be seen as a forerunner to the reinvigoration of local archaeological cultures in the post-Mao era.
**Rachel Taylor-Goh (née Chua) (London School of Economics)** – *The Many Lives of 'Peking Man': Plaster Casts of Sinanthropus Fossils in Exhibition, Display, and Reproduction*
This article examines the afterlives of the fossils of a prehistoric hominid found in China during the early twentieth-century, known as 'Peking Man' (then Sinanthropus Pekinensis, now Homo Erectus Pekinensis), through the material and discursive economies of fossil plaster casting in twentieth- and twenty-first-century China. Focusing on the production, circulation, and display of plaster casts – particularly of those derived from the initial tranche of excavations at Zhoukoudian, Beijing from 1927 to 1937 that uncovered these fossils – it traces how plaster casts of Peking Man fossils became sites of cultural inscription, political investment, and museological intervention. Through archival research and material analysis, the article explores how questions of authenticity, originality, and replication are negotiated within both international scientific communities and domestic Chinese heritage practices. It argues that fossil casts occupy a liminal status; simultaneously scientific proxies and cultural relics, their value derives not only from indexical accuracy but also from their ability to circulate and generate meaning across institutional, temporal, and ideological contexts. Special attention is paid to the Zhoukoudian Site Museum in the

present-day, its holdings, and its 2014 reinvention, revealing how Peking Man has come to symbolise not only evolutionary heritage but also Chinese national continuity, scientific modernity, and state legitimacy. In so doing, the article challenges Euro-American frameworks of museology and object theory, foregrounding instead a culturally-specific epistemology of reproduction grounded in Chinese exhibitionary culture and state-led heritage work. By recentring the cast as both method and metaphor, this article rethinks the entanglements of science, politics, and memory in the making of China's deep past.

**Sofia Bollo (University of Zurich)** – *This presentation 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, which include 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 tools to establish present-day 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 practice of archaeology, as a scientific discipline, lends credibility to the narratives presented in such exhibitions, which are further legitimised by the museum's authority. This study sheds light on the contemporary museological function of Chinese archaeology and the different narratives on the prehistoric past constructed within public museums, with implications for the understanding of cultural identity and nationalistic values in contemporary China. A pacifying sense of pride is triggered by archaeological heritage as a unifying force in the national network of public museums, articulating a view of Chinese culture as both diverse and unitary (多元一体 duoyuan yiti), celebrating local cultures, and promoting harmonious and diligent values that are appropriated by the cause of nationalism. Public museums foster a sense of cultural strength and awareness, letting visitors appreciate and identify with values emanating from and attested by their archaeological heritage by means of instrumentalization, aestheticisation, sanitisation and commodification.*

**Pelin Peiyi Lyu (Zhejiang University Museum of Art and Archaeology)** – *Developing Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies in a Chinese University Museum: A Case Study of Beauty of Creation Exhibition at Zhejiang University Museum of Art and Archaeology*

As China's museums experience rapid growth alongside an increasing number of international visitors - facilitated by recent visa-free policies - effective cross-cultural communication has become essential. Yet few Chinese museums offer English interpretation that truly engages foreign audiences, limiting meaningful exchange. University museums, with their academic resources and international networks, are uniquely placed to address this challenge. This study examines the permanent exhibition - Beauty of Creation: Material, Color, Shape, Technology, Belief and Aesthetics at the Zhejiang University Museum of Art and Archaeology (ZJUMAA) as a case study for developing cross-cultural communication strategies. The exhibition explores ancient Chinese artefacts through their materials, designs, and craftsmanship. From the Neolithic era onwards, it highlights how these objects evolved, reflecting changes in art, technology, and society. ZJUMAA is founded in 2019, and is recoginised as the National First-Class Museum in 2024, as well as the 'China National Conditions Education Center for International Students' in 2025. By analysing the exhibition's current Chinese and English interpretation and conducting visitor surveys with both domestic and international audiences, this study seeks to identify gaps in communication and propose tailored solutions. It aims to answer the key question: How can university museums in China better engage with international audiences? Expected outcomes include actionable recommendations for improving English interpretation, training museum staff in intercultural communication, and leveraging university's teaching resource to foster inclusive engagement. The study contributes both to scholarship on Chinese university museums and practical frameworks for cultural exchange in the museum.

**Zhu Yi (Lingnan University)** – *Unframing Spatial Presence: Exploring Digital Experience through Chinese Scroll Paintings in Museums*

Chinese scroll paintings are mostly displayed in glass or fenced off for protection and preservation reasons. As a result, visitors' appreciation of scroll paintings is based on a single vision that is mediated by cabinets. The integration of digital technologies in museum exhibitions has led to the use of interactive exhibits and digital media installations, which offer immersive participatory experiences for appreciating Chinese paintings. This paper argues that digital technologies not only provide interactive and appealing engagement, but also offer a sense of spatial presence for the visitors. Presence refers to the psychological state through which an individual feels fully present and engaged in a digital environment. However, current research on visitor experience lacks a discussion on subjective perception concerning presence theory. By adopting presence theory, this study analyses the case

studies of the permanent exhibition ‘An Era in Jinling: A Digital Art Exhibition’ held from 2021 at the Deji Art Museum in Nanjing and ‘Moonlight Away from Home: Exhibition of Qi Baishi’s Masterpieces from the Beijing Fine Art Academy Collection’ in 2023 at the Hunan Art Museum. Both exhibitions employed various digital means, such as 3D Unity technology, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies, creating an experience as if the individual is touring the painting. By examining the display and interpretative methods, digital tools, and visitor engagement, this study aims to explore how digital technology affects visitors’ experience and enhances their understanding and appreciation of Chinese scroll paintings through providing the ‘unframing’ spatial presence.

**Giovanna Puppin (University of Genoa)** – *Nostalgia for Sale: Merchandising Socialist Animation at the Shanghai Film Museum Gift Shop*

This paper examines the strategic commercialization within Chinese museum gift shops as a significant feature of the country's evolving cultural landscape. More specifically, it investigates the merchandising of the Shanghai Film Museum as a pivotal case study in China's broader project of cultural and commercial revitalization. Moving beyond mere commercialization, the museum’s gift shop strategically repurposes the iconic films of the Shanghai Animated Film Studio (SAFS) – such as Havoc in Heaven (1961-64), Nezha Conquers the Dragon King (1979), and Calabash Brothers (1986) – to construct a hybrid space where heritage, nostalgia, and soft power converge. Deploying a cultural branding framework, the analysis interrogates how the museum actively weaponizes nostalgia, transforming it into a marketable commodity through cultural IP licensing, cross-industry collaborations, and the reframing of socialist-era animation for contemporary consumers. The study argues that this process does more than sell memorabilia; it facilitates a form of affective investment where consumers purchase into an idealized "creative golden age," thereby asserting a distinct cultural identity against homogenizing global media flows. Ultimately, the paper concludes that these merchandising practices are aligned with national ambitions to transform China into a "country of big brands," a country of self-confidence, serving multilevel promotional purposes that range from disseminating "China Chic" aesthetics to bolstering not only the creative industries but also commercial companies more broadly.

[662] Sitong Zhang (The University of Edinburgh) and Yaquan Liang (The University of Edinburgh). *Gendered Boundary-Slippage through Différance: The Allegory of the Vulnerable in Chinese Post-Massacre Narrative.*

**Abstract.** Contemporary Chinese literature has long feminised the nation and its territory, often invoking violated female bodies as metaphors for national catastrophe. Such imagery reveals the gendered imagination underlying post-massacre writings, in which violence is structured as masculine domination over feminine vulnerability. As a major literary representation of Nanjing Massacre, Geling Yan’s The Flowers of War represents atrocity of genocide through gendered victimhood. This study argues, however, that the novella does more than reiterate gendered stereotypes of victims; it exposes how wartime violence reshapes boundaries, allowing subjects to break free fixed labels and forge communal bonds. Drawing on Mezzadra and Neilson’s concept of “borders” and Derrida’s theory of différance, the study examines the continual deferral and reconfiguration of gendered victimhood in The Flowers of War. The novella illustrates how the threat of sexual violence dissolves class conflicts among Chinese women, consolidating differentiated subjects into a community bound by shared national suffering. Simultaneously, it foregrounds the crossing and rearticulation of gendered, racial, spatial, and moral boundaries, underscoring the fluidity of borders under conditions of extreme violence. This study contends that the novella articulates a gendered yet fluid form of vulnerability. Integrating the notions of “borders” and différance, the analysis reveals how gender, under conditions of extreme violence, is activated as a social boundary that construct the “vulnerable” subjects, while vulnerability itself exerts a counterforce that loosens established categories and reconfigures relational orders. This perspective offers a renewed understanding of gendered vulnerability and the construction of post-massacre memory in Chinese genocide literature.

**Keywords:** post-massacre narrative, border, différance, gender, sexual voilence

[663] Corey Schultz (University of Nottingham Ningbo). *From the Silk Road to the 21st Century: Jewish Representation in Chinese Museums and Heritage Sites.*

**Abstract.** This presentation examines how Jews and Jewishness are discursively constructed Chinese museums and historical sites, and how their discourse and representation connects to ideologies currently circulating in China. It begins by reviewing representations of 20th century Jews and Jewishness, arguing that the discourses created reflect larger discourses currently circulating in China that praise the nation for its alleged ‘protection’ of 20th century European Jewish refugees, which I connect to current political desires to ‘tell China’s stories well’, a state effort to promote China ‘as a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, and a builder of

international development'. Then, I compare these discourses with the representations of pre-20th century Jews and Jewishness in dynastic China, which focus on the history of the Silk Road. I analyze how these representations connect to the discourses circulating around China's Belt and Road initiative and multicultural exchange, and their impact on heritage-making. I end by considering the current movement to obscure the history of the nation's indigenous Jews in Kaifeng, and query as to its larger significance of this de-heritigisation.
**Keywords:** Chinese museums, minority representation, Silk Road, Jews & Jewishness

[666] Xinyi Li (The University of Edinburgh). *Technological Empowerment, Identity Reconfiguration, and the Affective Gamble: A Study of Digital Emotional Labor among Rural Female Live Streamers.*
**Abstract.** In the context of digital technology empowerment, emotional commodification, and rural development in China, rural female live streamers have emerged as complex and dynamic representatives within the modern landscape. They face both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, these rural female live streamers utilize real-time livestreaming as a medium, blending "rural culture" with the "non-elite" of their personal identities. They actively learn and employ digital technologies to empower themselves, express their opinions, convey emotion, and earn financial compensation through the internet. On the other hand, they also become new types of emotional labourers in the digital age. The stereotype of rural female live streamers, the covert control of platforms and technologies, the blurring of boundaries between work and life, and the need to cater to audiences all contribute to a more complex and multifaceted form of work. This study takes the digital emotional labour of rural female live streamers as the research point, drawing on 2 years of fieldwork, in-depth interviews, and an online ethnography. It aims to present the authentic lives of rural female live streamers as emotional labourers in the digital economy, highlighting their dual experiences of empowerment and digital oppression. This research seeks to uncover the opportunities, challenges, and complex emotional experiences faced by rural, digital emotional labourers in contemporary Chinese society.
**Keywords:** Rural China, Female Live Streamers, Digital Emotional Labourer, Platform Economy, Identity Reconfiguration

[671] Irmy Schweiger (University of Stockholm). *Reimagining Memory: Future-Oriented Narratives in Sinophone Cultural Worlds.*
**Abstract.** This double-session panel investigates how Sinophone literature and culture generate "memories of the future" and articulate "futures of memory." By highlighting forward-looking reinterpretations of the past, the panel examines how Sinophone narratives open space for renewed forms of resistance, alternative political imaginaries, and creative world-making. Moving beyond trauma-centered approaches, we foreground temporalities that emphasize possibility, recomposition, and speculative reorientation—positioning remembrance as an active, anticipatory cultural practice. Our inquiry considers how Sinophone texts activate past experiences and material traces—objects, archives, landscapes, and embodied practices—not to reconstruct origins, but to chart potential trajectories. We explore how utopian projections, counterfactual histories, and future imaginaries emerge from diverse Sinophone settings; how earlier societies envisioned what lay ahead and how those imaginaries reverberate today; and how post-authoritarian and postcolonial cultural formations contest dominant temporal logics by imagining futures that resist neoliberal, colonial, or nationalist teleologies. Structured as a workshop with pre-circulated papers, the panel comprises three thematic strands. The first addresses ecological and more-than-human temporalities, asking how Sinophone climate fiction and ecocritical writing navigate geological, planetary, and multispecies scales. The second examines translation, transmedial adaptation, and transnational circulation, tracing how linguistic and medial shifts reshape future-oriented cultural imaginaries, especially in relation to colonial legacies and Sinophone Anglophone writing. The third investigates "memories of the future" within Taiwanese literary historiography, Malaysian Sinophone diasporic narratives, and racialized iconographies in nineteenth-century Western cartoons. Together, the papers illuminate how Sinophone cultural production reconfigures the relationship between past events, unfolding presents, and envisioned futures.
**Keywords:** Sinophone literature and cultures, transcultural and translated memories, memories of past futures, cli-fi and non-human memories of the future

**Martina Codeluppi (Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna)** – *A Past and Future Secret: Ecological Temporalities in Liu Cixin's "Yueye"*
This paper examines how Liu Cixin's short story "Yueye" reconfigures memory as an ecological and future-oriented practice. While Liu is widely known for large-scale cosmic imaginaries, "Yueye" offers a more intimate yet

conceptually expansive exploration of planetary temporality. The story juxtaposes human recollection with geological and cosmic scales, foregrounding a temporal structure in which memory extends far beyond the limits of human life. I argue that Liu mobilizes these temporalities not merely to speculate about environmental futures but to interrogate humanity's role within long temporal arcs of planetary change. The narrative's central speculative device—a cyclical astronomical event—functions as both a mnemonic trigger and a temporal rupture that destabilizes human-centered chronology. By embedding memory in non-human agencies and physical processes, "Yueye" invites readers to consider how natural phenomena operate as repositories of temporal knowledge. This ecocritical reading shows that Liu conceptualizes the planet itself as a memory-bearing entity whose inscriptions of time are materially preserved and potentially readable. Ultimately, the story demonstrates how speculative fiction can reimagine ecological memory as a dynamic and anticipatory force. Rather than merely recalling environmental loss or ecological trauma, Liu's narrative proposes a future-oriented ecology grounded in interspecies coexistence, cosmic cycles, and the acknowledgment of humanity's temporal smallness. Through its layering of geological, astronomical, and human time, "Yueye" offers a powerful example of how Sinophone climate fiction reshapes the relationship between memory, futurity, and ecological imagination.

**Federica Passi (Ca' Foscari University, Venice)** – *Human and Natural Memory to Imagine the Future: Reading Wu Ming-yi*

Taiwanese writer Wu Ming-yi is renowned for weaving ecological sensitivity, material culture, and complex temporal structures into his literary works. This paper examines how memory—both human and non-human—functions as a central narrative and ecological strategy in The Stolen Bicycle (2015). While the novel follows the narrator's search for a stolen bicycle, the plot unfolds as a constellation of personal recollections, historical testimonies, and material traces that anchor the narrative in Taiwan's socio-environmental past. Yet these memories serve not merely to reconstruct history; they are used to imagine restorative ecological futures. I argue that the novel's memory objects—bicycles, photographs, military artifacts, and handcrafted items—operate as mediators between individuals, communities, and ecosystems. Equally crucial are non-human memory agents, such as elephants, butterflies, and bodies of water, whose life cycles and migratory patterns embody temporalities that exceed human historiography. These entities serve as "memory keepers," allowing the narrative to explore how ecological systems store, transmit, and transform knowledge. By embedding memory within both human and non-human actors, Wu articulates an ecological methodology that challenges anthropocentric conceptions of time. The novel ultimately envisions a future grounded in reciprocity, interdependence, and the endurance of ecological relationships. Through a close reading of key episodes, this paper argues that The Stolen Bicycle reconceives memory as a forward-looking force capable of inspiring new modes of environmental care and imaginative ecological futures.

**Martina Caschera (University of Bergamo)** – *Mu Ming's "Future of Memory": Intersemiotic Translation of Jiashou yuren 假手于人*

Mu Ming 慕明 (Gu Congyun, b. 1988), is a Chengdu-born sci-fi writer who currently works as a programmer in the US. In 2021, the Italian publisher Future Fiction released a translated collection of her short stories, and in 2024 one of these stories, "Jiashou yuren 假手于人" ("By Those Hands"), was adapted into a graphic novel. As a (transmedial) narrative, Jiashou yuren offers a more positive and "organic" perspective on technology than that adopted by many other new-wave sci-fi authors. The novum (Suvin 1979) at the core of the story—a device designed to preserve a "knowledge domain"—is conceived as a tool for the conservation and retrieval of information that, much like oral and written languages, enables the survival of specific human abilities. This device becomes a locus where memory, practice, and artistry intersect with the possibilities afforded by technological innovation. Mu Ming's alternative "to actuality and the status quo," to borrow Freedman's (1987, 197) definition of sci-fi, thus constructs a possible "future of memory" and offers a utopian response to structural dichotomies—past/future, tradition/innovation, human control/automation—that recur throughout Sinophone sci-fi literature. The present essay examines this narrative through the lens of translation studies. Since both the short story and the graphic novel version are available in Italian, Jiashou yuren provides a unique opportunity to explore the work from an intersemiotic perspective. More specifically, it allows for an analysis of how the novum is represented and contextualized across media, and how this "vision of an equitable future" is graphicized.

**Simona Gallo (University of Milan)** – *Mapping Europe's Remembered Futures in Sinophone Anglophone fiction*

This paper explores how Sinophone Anglophone fiction reimagines Europe through future-oriented modes of remembrance. Focusing on Chinese-born writer Yan Ge's Elsewhere (2023), particularly its stories set in Dublin, Stockholm, and London, the analysis investigates how European spaces are remembered from the linguistic and affective "elsewhere" of migration, multilingualism, and minoritized subjectivity. Rather than treating Europe as a

stable cultural referent or as an object of nostalgia, Yan Ge constructs liminal spaces—domestic interiors, marginal urban zones, ephemeral festival sites—where memory becomes an anticipatory and forward-looking structure. Drawing on Westphal's geocritical theory of spatial disjunction, Lionnet and Shih's concept of diasporic positionality, and Tally's work on literary cartography, I argue that Elsewhere maps Europe as a site of layered, intersecting temporalities. Through shifting focalization, polyphonic narrative voices, and attention to minor spatial details, Yan Ge refracts memory through affective opacity and uncertainty, enabling past and future to converge in suspended, open-ended temporal forms. These narratives mobilize affirmative recollections—creativity, solidarity, desire—even as they destabilize dominant imaginaries of Europe as cosmopolitan ideal or temporal destination. By relocating European memory within Sinophone Anglophone experience, Yan Ge's fiction proposes "Europe otherwise": a heuristic that neither recenters Europe nor dismisses it, but reads it as a palimpsest of unresolved trajectories, multilingual encounters, and potential futures. Ultimately, this paper argues that future-oriented memory in Sinophone Anglophone fiction expands how Europe can be conceptualized, remembered, and reimagined within transnational literary spaces.

**Aoife Cantrill (Queen's College, University of Oxford)** – *Un-original: Translating the Colonial Archive in Contemporary Taiwanese Culture*

This paper investigates how contemporary Taiwanese creatives employ translation to intervene in the colonial archive, focusing on works by artist Lin Hongjohn and novelist Yang Shuang-zi. Across East Asia, visual archival materials—particularly photographs and paintings—are often repurposed to address the lingering effects of colonial violence. Yet far less attention has been given to how textual archives may be reactivated, disrupted, or "mis-translated" to unsettle established historical narratives. I argue that Lin and Yang deploy translation as a method of interrogating, rather than reproducing, the epistemic authority of colonial documents. Drawing on Lauren Berlant's theory of the "glitch," the paper analyzes moments where these creatives deliberately interrupt the procedures of archival reading, listening, and translation. Through diglossic shifts, fragmentary transliterations, and the juxtaposition of competing language registers, their works foreground the instability of colonial textuality. These glitches expose the gaps between language as it appears in archival records—static, repetitive, bureaucratically standardized—and language as a living, evolving medium shaped by lived experience. By reframing translation as disruptive rather than restorative, Lin and Yang challenge the assumption that archives offer transparent access to colonial pasts. Instead, their creative interventions reveal linguistic friction as a productive force that opens space for alternative meanings, counter-memories, and speculative futures. In examining how Taiwanese artists translate the colonial archive against its grain, this paper demonstrates how linguistic experimentation becomes a mode of future-oriented memory work within Sinophone cultural production.

**Qianye GUO (Université Paris Cité, CRCAO)** – *Looking Back to Homeland or Envisioning a New Land: Migrant Family Memory in Zhang Guixing's Wanpi Jiazu 頑皮家族 (The Naughty Family)*

This paper examines how Zhang Guixing's Wanpi Jiazu (1996) constructs Malaysian Chinese migrant family memory as a dynamic interplay between retrospective longing and imaginative futurity. While Malaysian Chinese literature is often framed through narratives of nostalgia or migrant suffering, The Naughty Family offers a playful, polyphonic reconstruction of migration that foregrounds agency, creativity, and evolving communal identities. Through its whimsical narrative mode and fragmented structure, the novel traces a family's multi-generational journey from China to Southeast Asia, revealing how memory shifts across time and space. Martial arts objects—such as weapons and training implements—initially function as material anchors linking the family to its genealogical past. Yet, once transplanted to a new land, these objects take on transformed social meanings: they become practical tools for survival, markers of cultural adaptability, and instruments for forging new relationships. As the impending Japanese invasion disrupts the migrant community, these objects acquire a future-oriented significance. They become catalysts for utopian imaginaries of protection, solidarity, and the revival of the family's martial arts hall. Drawing on narratology and diaspora studies, this paper shows how Zhang crafts migrant memory through multiplicity, humor, and imaginative expansion rather than linear narrative or nostalgic recovery. The novel's memory practices resist dominant historical narratives of hardship by articulating alternative temporalities in which past experiences enable potential futures. In doing so, The Naughty Family contributes to a broader rethinking of Sinophone migrant literature as a site of generative remembrance and utopian aspiration.

**Irmy Schweiger (Stockholm University)** – *Memories of the Future in Post-Authoritarian Taiwan: Millennial Rewritings of Literary History*

This paper explores how contemporary Taiwanese millennial writers generate "memories of the future" through their rewritings of literary history. Part of a broader project on temporality in Taiwan's post-authoritarian cultural production, the study argues that future-thinking is intrinsic to collective memory. Rather than viewing the future

as simply following the past, millennial texts reveal how imagined futures coexist with, reshape, and retroactively reconfigure historical meaning. Drawing on Adam and Groves' theory of anticipatory memory and Jedlowski's insight that projected futures inform present action, the paper conceptualizes the past as an archive of unrealized aspirations—some forgotten, others newly retrievable. Using Koselleck's notion of the horizon of expectation, understood as socially and affectively constituted, the analysis shows how Taiwan's millennial generation negotiates horizons shaped by democratization, neoliberal precarity, and geopolitical uncertainty. Cultural rupture plays a significant role in these generational dynamics. Events such as the 2014 Sunflower Movement catalyzed new forms of political engagement and prompted millennial writers to revisit earlier periods of Taiwanese literary production. Through autobiographical essays, speculative reinterpretations of historical episodes, and alternative literary genealogies, these writers identify, reclaim, or reimagine futures embedded in Taiwan's past. By analyzing how millennial cultural texts encode "futures past," this paper demonstrates how literary history becomes a site of anticipatory imagination. Millennial interventions reveal the malleability of collective memory and open conceptual space for alternative present-futures within Taiwan's evolving literary and political landscape.

[672] Zhirui Zhang (Tübingen University), Hirotaka Kobayashi (Ruhr University Bochum) and Fabian Hiller (Tübingen University). *Political Gain (de 得) as Narrative, Relationality, and Legitimacy in Chinese World Imagination, from the Pre-imperial Age to the Xi Era.*

**Abstract.** The dialectic of de 得 (gain) and shi 失 (loss) has long served as a core metric in Chinese political logic. The past decade has been widely perceived as a period where "the West loses" while "China gains." Yet given China's rising global ambition, its gain—and gaining—is no longer a domestic problem. An assessment of Chinese political conceptions of "gain" is pressing. This panel traces the connotations of political gain across China's long history of world imagination. Through a philological and linguistic examination of tianxia 天下 narratives in the Zuo zhuan 左傳, Zhirui Zhang revisits an enduring Chinese historiographical practice of evaluating political gain and loss. Hirotaka Kobayashi and Fabian Hiller turn to explore the relational reconfigurations of political gain within Chinese intellectual history. Kobayashi investigates Huang Zongxi's (1610–1695) reconceptualization of "private" and "public gain," while Hiller foregrounds Zhang Taiyan's (1869–1936) "Mingdu" 明獨 (Illuminating Individuality) as a vision where legitimacy derives from individual fulfillment. Through genealogical analysis and digital ethnography, across China's longue durée, this panel offers an interdisciplinary study of the changing political conceptions of "gain." It reconstructs political gain as a historically contested category through which political actors, historians, and thinkers negotiated the relations between acquisition and legitimacy, self-interest and public order, historical memory and normative judgment.

**Keywords:** political gain, world imagination, historical narrative, relationality, legitimacy

**Zhirui Zhang (Tübingen University)** – *Writing Political Gain: Tianxia Narratives in the Zuo zhuan 左傳*

This paper investigates the representation of political acquisition in the Zuo zhuan. The focus lies in tianxia 天下, a notion that designates the widest imaginable political space in traditional Chinese worldview. Given the notion's scarce attestation in early Zhou sources, it is difficult to determine whether its appearances in the Zuo zhuan are direct quotations or later paraphrases. Yet the Zuo zhuan shows a distinctive pattern in its deployment of tianxia. It wove tianxia into two recurring narrative scenes: the royal memory of early Zhou enfeoffment, often invoked amid the erosion of royal lands, and Chu 楚 rulers' desire for the universal authority claimed by the Zhou. Compared with texts traditionally dated to the early Zhou, such as the Shangshu 尚書 and the Shijing 詩經, the first scene transforms tianxia from a Heaven-directed cosmic space into a political field open to human reordering. The second binds tianxia to verbs such as qu 取 (to seize), zheng 爭 (to contest), and de 得 (to gain), giving form to a predatory logic of political acquisition. This paper suggests that these tianxia-narratives cannot be treated as transparent records of Spring and Autumn political or intellectual reality. Rather, they are themselves intellectual evidence, revealing how the authors of the Zuo zhuan responded to growing political competition and appropriation. Beyond historical representation of political gain, this paper finally revisits an enduring tradition of evaluating "political gain and loss" (zhengzhi deshi 政治得失) in Chinese historiography.

**Hirotaka Kobayashi (Ruhr University Bochum)** – *Conceptions of "Private" and "Public Gain" in the early Qing: Huang Zongxi's 黃宗羲 (1610–1695) References to gong 公 and si 私*

This paper examines Huang Zongxi's 黃宗羲 (1610–1695) references to the terms gong 公 and si 私 to explore his conceptions of "private" and "public interest" in the early Qing period. Huang was opposed to the private appropriation of the empire's resources by the emperor, calling it "to consider the world's gain to completely belong to oneself." In his Mingyi daifang lu 明夷待訪錄 (1663) he idealizes "the rule of the Three Dynasties" and

denounces the governance of dynastic rulers since the First Emperor of Qin. He emphasizes the importance of scholar-officials in forming a group for "learning through discussions" (jiangxue 講學) and "discussions of the public good" (gonglun 公論). He believed that they shared a sense of responsibility for society and thus engaged in these discussions. However, he was aware that discussions of scholar-officials and their formation of a peer group would not suffice to prevent autocracy and privatization of "public gain" (gongli 公利). Therefore, he claimed that a law to control authority was necessary.

By analyzing Huang's references to terms like gong and si, I show that his conceptions of "private" and "public gain" significantly differed from their predecessors in their references to crucial social spheres such as government, legal system, and academies (xuexiao 學校). This paper argues that Huang Zongxi's critique of the imperial order of his time and his proposal for educational reform reflect the transformation of conceptions of gain in the early Qing.

**Fabian Hiller (Tübingen University)** – *The Self and the Collective: Zhang Taiyan and the Affective Politics of "Gain" in Early Chinese Modernity*

This paper examines Zhang Taiyan's theorization of qun 群 (the collective) and du 獨 (the individual) as an early rearticulation of selfhood, society, and the idea of "gain." Focusing on Zhang's essay "Mingdu" 明獨 (1894; revised 1904) within the broader context of Qiushu 訄書, I argue that Zhang's notion of the "great individual" (da du 大獨) offers an affective and ethical model of subjectivity that resists both utilitarian collectivism and authoritarian state ideology. Read alongside Yan Fu's translation of John Stuart Mill's On Liberty, Zhang's tension between qun and du illuminates early attempts to reconcile individual fulfillment with collective legitimacy—a tension that reappears in contemporary discourse surrounding "sense of gain" (huodegan 獲得感). For Zhang, du is not isolation but the ontological ground of authentic collectivity: only when individuals maintain moral autonomy can collective life possess integrity. His critique of late Qing utilitarianism—where gain was increasingly equated with wealth and power—foregrounds a vision of spiritual autonomy and self-reliance as true source of affective fulfillment. Against state-directed emotional unity, Zhang proposes an affective politics in which genuine gain arises from inner clarity rather than collective achievement. By revisiting Zhang's reflections, this paper contributes to the panel's inquiry into the emotional foundations of political legitimacy. It offers a counter-genealogy to contemporary narratives of national rejuvenation, suggesting that the experience of legitimacy—what is now called "sense of gain"—rests less in collective prosperity than in the cultivation of independent moral agency.

[674] Yunfei Yang (The Chinese University of Hong Kong). *Minor Scribes and Anecdotal Histories: Collective Biography and Peripheral Memory of the Restoration in Early Southern Song.*

**Abstract.** Following the fall of the Northern Song, historiography entered a period of decline amidst political disarray. Once Southern Song governance stabilized, the regime under Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127–1162) and councilor Qin Gui 秦檜 (1091–1155) tightly controlled official historiography and prohibited private historical writing. After Qin's death, however, literati from diverse backgrounds began to reconstruct the memory of dynastic crisis and Restoration (zhongxing 中興) on their own terms. Where modern scholarship has focused on prominent annalistic histories authored by scholar-officials with archival access or official affiliations, this paper examines a parallel phenomenon: collective biographical compilations produced by lower- and mid-ranking literati, including students, recluses, and local scholars. These biographical collections encompassed a range of Restoration-era figures, such as court high officials and generals, loyalists and traitors, male and female martyrs, and recluses, sometimes categorizing them according to moral and social typologies. These texts served as outlets for expressing emotional responses to state humiliation and Qin's abuses of power. Drawing on personal observation and networks, these biographies diverged markedly from the official historiography and later Daoxue 道學 narratives. Although most of these biographies are inextant, this study investigates their features through scattered references embedded in annalistic histories, collected works, bibliographies, and local gazetteers. Through analyzing these traces, the paper sheds light on the sources, motives, and mnemonic strategies of these minor biographers. Despite their marginal status, their event-centered historical style likely shaped Restoration memory beyond elite institutions, leaving imprints on popular storytelling and vernacular novels in and after the late Southern Song.

**Keywords:** Southern Song Restoration, Emperor Gaozong of the Song, collective biography, Song Dynasty historiography

[676] Xinyue Zhang (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona). *Allowed Traumas and Repressed Traumas: Discursive Boundaries in Chinese Scar Literature and Sinophone Malaysian May 13 Writing.*

**Abstract.** In the late 1960s and early 1970s, different parts of the Sinophone world were shaken by major historical crises, including the Cultural Revolution in the PRC and the May 13 Incident in Malaysia. These events, though

unfolding in distinct national contexts, have left comparable scars in Chinese-language literature. Focusing on Chinese Scar Literature and Sinophone Malaysian writing on May 13, this article proposes the paired concepts of "allowed trauma" and "repressed trauma" and shifts attention from the depth of suffering itself to the discursive boundaries within which trauma can be narrated. It argues that Scar Literature is a paradigmatic form of "allowed trauma": its narratives were, in a specific historical moment, appropriated by official discourse and mobilised to serve the reconstruction of a political agenda. Their discursive boundary lies in "denouncing the past" in order to "legitimise the present": they provide channels for emotional catharsis while channelling traumatic experience into a manageable narrative of the New Era. By contrast, Sinophone Malaysian May 13 writing has long been shaped as "repressed trauma." Related memories are often silenced or avoided in Malaysia's public sphere; yet once they are articulated in fictional form and circulate within a cross-regional Sinophone space, such texts tend to resist straightforward incorporation into state narratives and more strongly maintain an independent stance and perspective. Through strategies of metaphor, fragmentation, and family storytelling, they persistently question official histories. Through a close reading and juxtaposition of representative texts, the article suggests that how trauma can be spoken, and how far it can be taken in literary form, is determined less by the "severity" of the events themselves than by shifting discursive boundaries and the ways in which collective memory is managed.
**Keywords:** Scar Literature, Sinophone Malaysian literature, May 13 Incident, trauma narrative, discursive boundaries, Sinophone world

[679] Rebeca Zhu Cao (Tsinghua University). *Huali: A Soft Strategy of Space, Time, and Experience in the Qing Domestic Environment.*
**Abstract.** Employing an interdisciplinary approach that integrates visual analysis and historical texts, this study proposes a re-reading of the Qing dynasty domestic space through the lens of the huali (flower trellis), an understudied garden element that serves as a key representative of the continuous and experience-driven "scenic space". More than a component of conventional garden scenery, it acts as a mediating entity that softly defines spaces while subtly guiding inhabitants into a dynamic and immersive dialogue with their natural surroundings. The paper begins by outlining the diverse forms of huali as semi-natural, semi-artificial constructions—such as floral paths, screens, and pergola—highlighting their multiplicity in both physical configuration and cultural meaning. It then turns to visual and literary sources to explore how it softly demarcates, encloses, and connects garden spaces, creating layered scenes that suggest separation without disconnection, while also using spatial narratives to transcend literal depiction to evoke dramatic and poetic imagination. Furthermore, the study reveals the huali as a medium of temporal expression: grounded in the Chinese philosophy of harmonizing with seasonal rhythms, it transforms the passage of time into tangible spatial experience through the flourishing and fading of plants, thus embodying a soft, growing, redefinable approach to space and the romantic pursuit of a lived environment. Ultimately, the huali exemplifies the idealized interplay between humanity and the natural environment presenting a philosophy that offers a resonant alternative to the often-prescriptive approaches of contemporary design.
**Keywords:** Huali (Flower Trellis), Spatial Narrative, Spatial Temporality, Scenic Space, Qing Dynasty Domestic Space

[680] Chenyu Lien (Chaoyang University of Technology). *Housing Culture as Social Practice: How Taiwan's Social Housing Generates New Forms of Collective Living.*
**Abstract.** In recent years, Taiwan's social housing has developed beyond policy legalization and physical construction to become a site for the deliberate production of new housing cultures. This paper argues that Taiwan's model differs from conventional public housing by emphasizing social practices rather than architectural design as the primary mechanism for shaping residential life. Local governments and operating institutions have implemented a series of socially oriented interventions, including the selection of "seed residents" with a willingness to engage in collective life, the use of public art funding to initiate community-based activities, and the establishment of entire co-living floors as experimental environments for shared living.
Drawing on policy documents, project reports, and case observations from multiple social housing developments, this study examines how these interventions actively cultivate social connections and micro-networks among residents from the earliest stages of habitation. Instead of providing additional facilities for a generalized public, Taiwan's social housing uses targeted actions and curated participation to support trust-building, cooperation, and everyday interaction.
The paper argues that this approach represents a form of state-enabled cultural production, in which residential culture emerges through structured social engagement. Taiwan's case offers a distinctive perspective within contemporary housing studies by illustrating how governments and residents can co-produce a dynamic, practice-

based housing culture that reshapes notions of community, belonging, and collective urban living.
**Keywords:** Social housing, Housing culture, Collective living

[683] Paolo De Troia (Sapienza University of Rome), Ileana Amadei (Sapienza University of Rome) and Irene Verzì (Sapienza University of Rome). *Mapping Across Empires. Chinese Toponyms and the Eurasian Cultural Exchange from the Tang–Song to Jesuit China: a New Research Project Proposal.*

**Abstract.** This panel presents two projects: the "Chinese Toponyms Database", which documents Chinese names for foreign regions in Tang–Song sources, and the "Sino-Jesuit Toponyms Database" from the "Mapping and Translating Spaces, Cultures and Languages" project, focused on Ming–Qing cartography and Jesuit-mediated nomenclature. They examine how China conceptualized the foreign world and how intercultural contacts developed through the creation of placenames. By linking these databases and integrating research on Yuan-Dynasty geography, the panel proposes a diachronic framework for analysing Eurasian exchanges. Tang–Song materials show how interaction with the Arab-Islamic world reshaped Chinese geographical categories through toponymic innovations (Park 2012; Zhang 2003). Geographical knowledge developed during the Yuan era was reflected in Marco Polo's and Franciscans' narrative geographies (ca. 1300-30), the Da Ming Hun Yi Tu - 大明混一圖 (1389), the Korean Gangnido (1402), and was later spatialised in European cartography, particularly Fra Mauro's world map (1450), influencing worldviews in Asia and Europe (Cattaneo 2023). The Ming–Qing papers analyse Jesuit cartography and the Sinicization of global place names, examining their formation and the exchanges behind them (Masini 1993; Caboara 2022; De Troia 2013; Piastra 2021; Hostetler 2024). Travel writing and missionary archives illuminate the agents and processes through which foreign spaces were described and reinterpreted (Forêt & Kaplony 2008). Overall, these materials show how toponyms act as vectors revealing shifting worldviews and evolving boundaries of intercultural contact. The panel presents Chinese geographical knowledge as an intercultural system and lays the foundations for a new research initiative.
**Keywords:** Toponyms, Database, Travel Literature, Historical Geography, Cartography, Cultural History, Cross-cultural studies, Jesuit Missionaries

**Ileana Amadei (Sapienza University of Rome)** – *Travelogues and Geographical Knowledge: Places, Encounters, and Narratives*

Geographical works about foreign lands, each with its own distinct characteristics, are the results of encounters. These meetings could take place in many ways, between the traveling authors and the local population, or between authors and travellers whose experiences they use for their own production. In both scenarios, these texts function as a crucial bridge between the travel experiences—whether those of the authors themselves or their informants—and geographical knowledge. These works are fundamental for understanding the extent of the known world at a given time and the depth of that knowledge. A extensive and systematic portion of many of these works is dedicated to describing the local realities. This focus is often driven by a practical motivation guiding the narrative: the interest is polarized on elements that could guarantee subsistence or prove useful, on potential dangers, and on indigenous populations—who were simultaneously viewed as enemies, friends, informants, or suppliers of goods. Consequently, while the authors report all this information, the resulting document can never be a faithful reproduction of an objective reality. Instead, it is a representation that reflects a particular worldview. This key aspect will be illuminated through specific examples drawn from works of the Yuan and Ming dynasties, offering a different perspective for analysing these geographical texts.

**Paolo De Troia (Sapienza University of Rome)** – *Cultural and Linguistic Encounter in Sino-Jesuit Geographical Works: The MAT Project Geographical Names Database*

From the late sixteenth century onward, Jesuit missionaries helped introduce into China a new vision of the world shaped by European cartography. Through maps, atlases, globes, and descriptive accounts, they conveyed geographical models associated with Ortelius, Mercator, and others to Chinese scholars. Yet these works were never simple Western imports. They incorporated Chinese information, adapted local terminology, and blended multiple traditions, becoming genuine hybrid products born of sustained cultural contact. Research has examined many aspects of this exchange, but a crucial tool is still missing: a systematic record of the geographical names coined or reshaped during this encounter. Missionary texts of the seventeenth century contain numerous toponyms referring to Western regions, many of which later influenced the broader Chinese vocabulary of the foreign world. Identifying them is often challenging, and the absence of a dedicated glossary obscures the linguistic negotiations behind their creation. This presentation introduces a project within the MAT framework that addresses this gap through a digital analytical dictionary of Chinese toponyms in seventeenth-century missionary

geography. The database catalogues each attested place name, matches it with its modern equivalent, and analyses the linguistic strategies and cultural contexts that shaped it. By tracing how these names emerged at the crossroads of translation, adaptation, and mutual interpretation, the project highlights not only Jesuit contributions but the wider constellation of actors—Chinese literati, interpreters, court officials—who participated in redefining global geography. The resulting picture is one of multidirectional cultural encounter, where toponyms became both products and agents of early modern intercultural exchange.

**Irene Verzì (Sapienza University of Rome)** – *Circular Toponyms: The Lexical Trajectories of Melanesia from the Kunyu Wanguo Quantu to Contemporary Chinese*

This study examines several Melanesian toponyms appearing in Matteo Ricci's Kunyu Wanguo Quantu 坤舆万国全图 (1602), tracing their origins, transformations, and later reception in the Chinese linguistic sphere. Ricci's map introduced an unprecedented set of names for the South Pacific at a moment when Chinese geographical knowledge of the region was extremely limited. Over the centuries, these early designations were reshaped by explorers and cartographers from diverse national and cultural backgrounds. Their evolving Western forms gradually returned to China through layered processes of phonetic transcription, semantic reinterpretation, and cartographic revision, producing a complex and sometimes discontinuous family of place names. Adopting a transdisciplinary approach that combines historical linguistics, toponymy, and historical geography, the study reconstructs this circular lexical trajectory: from Ricci's first formulations, through Dutch and Portuguese geographical works, to later Chinese maps and gazetteers, and finally to contemporary standardized usage. This diachronic and synchronic analysis builds a rare cultural bridge connecting each toponym's initial emergence to its modern form. Beyond highlighting Jesuit contributions, the study emphasizes the dynamic interaction of multiple agencies—European navigators, Asian intermediaries, Chinese scholars, and global cartographic traditions—whose entangled exchanges shaped the vocabulary of Melanesia in Chinese. The resulting lexical conversion table reflects not only linguistic evolution, but also the broader history of cultural encounters and reciprocal reinterpretations that defined early-modern and modern Sino-European contact.

[688] Annette Kieser (Universitiy of Münster), Keith Knapp (The Citadel, Charleston), Shing Müller (University of Münster) and Yukinobu Abe (Chuo University). *How to protect your eternal home: Guardians and auspicious beasts in Chinese funerary structures from the Period of Division (220-589).*

**Abstract.** The Period of Division in China was characterized by non-Han invasion, mass migration and a rapid rise and fall of states. Demographic and political changes brough about new epistemes, canons of thought and cultural ideas that also led to changing mortuary practices.

Chinese burials of the past were often designed as an underground home of the deceased that had to be not only furnished but also protected. This panel explores the various figures and creatures intended to make the tomb a protected and auspicious space and how these protective prophylactic images changed in accordance with a new political, social, or demographic environment.

Four case studies will show how foreign influence and movement of population shaped the burial culture both above ground and below: winged guardian lions on top of tombs, tomb guardian figures placed inside the tombs, animals decorating duisu guan vessels, and finally, foreign gods on tomb doors. Together, they demonstrate how alien forms became adopted, non-Chinese deities and hybrid creatures integrated into local repertories, and guardian types standardized as new political centers and migrant networks consolidated influence.

**Keywords:** Period of Division, guardian figures, auspicious beasts, figured jars, burial custom

**Keith Knapp (The Citadel, Charleston)** – *Invasive Auspicious Beasts: The Replacement of Animal Figurines with Propitious Creatures on Figured Jars (duisu guan 堆塑罐)*

Spirit or Soul Jars are eye-catching funerary vessels that were buried with the wealthy dead in southeastern China from the second to the fourth century CE. One of their remarkable features is that they are often decorated with figurines of natural animals and humans. However, by the late third century, the number of animals depicted on the jars decreased. They were frequently replaced by two-dimensional stamps of auspicious creatures. What was responsible for this change? Where were these images of auspicious creatures coming from? What exact meaning did they have? My paper will document how this new type of decoration gradually changed the pictorial program of the jars. It will also identify each of these auspicious creatures and their meanings. I will indicate that the preponderance of these fantastical beasts was prevalent in northern China during the Han Dynasty. Hence, their appearance on these indigenous jars indicates the large-scale migration of refugees from war-stricken northern China to Jiangnan (Southeastern China). The near banishment of natural animal figurines also suggests the waning

strength of the cultural influence of the indigenous Mountain Yue (Shan Yue 山越) people.

**Annette Kieser (University of Münster)** – *Local guardian figures in Yangzi Middle Region tombs of the early Six Dynasties*

Guardian figures were prominent features in tombs during the period of division (220–589). Undisturbed tombs show that they were usually placed facing the entrance. In both the northern (Luoyang) and southern (Jiankang) capital regions of the divided realm, unicorn-like creatures made of bronze, clay, or wood predominated. Outside these centers, however, a variety of other creatures functioned as tomb guardians, many of them individually but not particularly artfully crafted—often essentially "backyard-made"—and exhibiting characteristics that are entirely different from those in the capital cities. By the end of the fourth century, this variety had already disappeared. Using the Middle Yangzi region as a case study, my paper examines local tomb guardian figures and their forms. I argue that local beliefs and family traditions determined the choice of figures, which were at times even replaced by protective inscriptions. I further show that massive migration into southern China and especially the relocation of the Jin court to Jiankang in 317 led to the standardization of tomb equipment, which extended beyond the capital Jiankang and ultimately contributed to the disappearance of this rich local tradition of guardian figurines.

**Shing Müller (University of Munich)** – *Foreign gods over Pingcheng (398–494)*

Pingcheng, capital of the early Northern Wei founded by the Tuoba Xianbei, was inhabited by a multitude of people of diverse cultures. These can be best demonstrated by the great variety of tomb paintings with idiosyncratic schemes, styles, and components. The tombs were also guarded by variegated painted and modelled god-like figures. While the idea basically was rooted in a much longer funerary tradition in the Yellow-River Basin, the figures, like the people they were supposed to protect, were most likely of various origins and not necessarily tomb guardians per se. They were brought into the capital by the migrants—and their figural characters were also possibly remodeled in such a way that their power could be enacted anew. It appears that Pingcheng inhabitants were experimenting with the efficacy of different gods before making the final decision to select one or two types of guardians. In this preliminary study, I shall define the archaeological findings and describe the images of guardians, and, finally, localize the origins and functions of such ephemeral deities before they entered Pingcheng.

**Yukinobu Abe (Chuo University)** – *Winged Stone Beasts of Southern Dynasties Tombs*

During the Southern Qi and Liang dynasties (479–557), large, winged stone beasts were placed on either side of the passage leading to imperial and princely tombs in order to ward off evil spirits. Although winged beast imagery in China is thought to have been introduced from the ancient Near East before the sixth century BCE, the earliest instances of their installation as stone guardians outside tombs date from the Eastern Han (25–220). In the Southern Qi and Liang period, these statues evolved into large-scale monuments reserved for the imperial family, with clear distinctions introduced between the left and right beasts. Among these differences, the number of horns and the depiction of male and female genitalia are particularly striking. At this time, these two features were brought together to serve as a visual expression of yin and yang. A closer examination shows that their arrangement on the left and right not only reflected yin–yang but also marked distinctions between emperors and princes, and between legitimate, posthumously elevated, and deposed emperors. Originally foreign in origin, winged stone beasts of the Southern Dynasties thus functioned both as guardian creatures and as a means of expressing Confucian hierarchical order and the legitimacy of the interred.

[689] Wan-Yi Liu (University of Vienna). *This Is Not an Embassy (Made in Taiwan): Transnational Touring Theatre Co-Production as a Cultural Diplomacy Example.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines the touring co-produced theatrical work This Is Not an Embassy (Made in Taiwan) by Stefan Kaegi, a production rooted in Taiwan's geopolitical condition and contested political identity. Operating through the construction of national imaginaries and theatrical tricks, the work offers a critical case for understanding how global theatre can function simultaneously as a site of aesthetic innovation and political negotiation.

Entering the 21st century, transnational collaboration co-funded by multiple venues redistribute artistic risk while embedding interculturality within transnational systems of funding, mobility, and institutional partnership. Although European cultural institutions co-produce works with artists from Asia, Latin America, and Africa under the rhetoric of diversity, these structures risk reproducing neocolonial dynamics unless they ensure equitable creative process and critical attention to local contexts. Within this landscape, contemporary theatre becomes a dynamic arena for negotiating cultural identity and artistic power reaffirming its role as representational space for resistance. Rather than staging a single opinion, Kaegi worked with non-professional performers, activists, and

community members to collage foreground lived experience with social struggle. These practices shift the performance away from director-centered perspective toward polyphonic narration.
By imaging a fictional embassy on stage, This Is Not an Embassy highlights Taiwan's paradoxical condition of global visibility and diplomatic isolation. Its negotiation among Mandarin, English, Taiwanese, and Amis positions language as a site of ideological tension and generational conflict. Combining close performance analysis, the study argues that collaborative theatre can interrogate geopolitical structures while expanding the aesthetic and ethical possibilities of contemporary global performance.
**Keywords:** Cultural diplomacy, Touring production, Transnational co-production, Political theater

[690] Ming Ho Lam (SOAS, University of London). *Practice and Principle: Cooperation between local officials and Buddhist institutions in the Song dynasty.*
**Abstract.** During the Song dynasty (960-1279), the revival of Confucianism led scholar-officials to uphold Confucian thought and oppose Buddhism. Confucian scholar officials usually express their rejection of Buddhism in their formal pronouncements. Present studies focus on integrating the ideas of scholar-officials and Buddhist monks through their writings. However, the discussions mainly focused on the ideological writings of scholar-officials. Records in local gazetteers and collected works show that scholars-officials cooperated with Buddhist monks to provide relief and to operate charities, despite this ideological conflict. This study uses Zhen Dexiu (真德秀, 1178-1235) and Liu Kezhuang (劉克莊, 1187–1269) as examples to reconstruct this phenomenon. Zhen Dexiu was renowned for inheriting Zhu Xi's teachings, and Liu Kezhuang was his disciple. They made significant contributions while serving as the local magistrates in Jiangdong 江東 (today's Anhui) and Fujian. When they served as magistrates of Jiangdong and Quanzhou, they collaborated with Buddhist monks and recognized their contributions. This study examines why Confucian scholar-officials chose to cooperate with Buddhist monks and how officials adapted the local beliefs to work with monks. What factors affect the officials to work with monks in the locals? It also aims to analyse this phenomenon at the local level, mainly using local and temple gazetteers and the collected writings of the literati.
**Keywords:** Song dynasty, Buddhism, charity, disaster relief, scholar-official

[691] Joanna Nawrotkiewicz (University of Łódź). *Wolf Warrior Diplomacy in Multilateral Institutions: China's Crisis Signalling During COVID-19 Pandemic.*
**Abstract.** Although "wolf warrior diplomacy" (WWD) has become a widely discussed feature of China's external behaviour, much of the existing research remains narrow in scope and often offers limited analytical depth – relying solely on spokesperson statements, anecdotal cases or broad justifications rooted in rising nationalism. The multilateral dimension of WWD remains particularly understudied, despite the fact that institutional rules, peer scrutiny and reputational incentives significantly differ from bilateral arenas.
This paper offers an alternative approach by conceptualizing WWD as a crisis-induced signalling strategy, drawing on insights from Foreign Policy Analysis to explain why confrontational rhetoric emerges, fluctuates or disappears across different diplomatic settings. It analyses China's diplomatic discourse in the UN entities – World Health Organization, the Human Rights Council and the Food and Agriculture Organization – during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study asks two main research questions: (1) How does China adjust rhetorical intensity across different multilateral arenas? (2) Under what conditions does WWD escalate, moderate or remain absent?
Methodologically, the paper combines content analysis and critical discourse analysis of a corpus of Chinese statements and interventions in analysed organizations (2019-2023). Qualitative Comparative Analysis is used to identify rhetorical escalation or restraint, and to assess how politicization, procedural constraints and China's institutional position shape discursive choices.
**Keywords:** Wolf Warrior Diplomacy, International Organisations, Foreign Policy Analysis, Crisis Diplomacy, COVID-19 Pandemic

[694] Zuzanna Wnuk (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan), Wisława Szkudlarczyk-Brkić (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan) and Serena Di Fusco (University of Naples "L'Orientale"). *New Perspectives on Teaching Chinese Grammar at the Beginner Level: Theory and Practice.*
**Abstract.** The growing interest in learning Chinese across Europe has intensified the need for beginner-level grammar materials that are comprehensible, up-to-date, and adapted to learners' linguistic backgrounds. Although many grammar resources in English are widely available, they often do not meet the needs of students learning Chinese in national educational contexts and provide limited support. Learners and educators in Europe encounter

explanations that overlook L1-specific challenges, rely on unfamiliar terminology, or disconnect grammatical forms from actual communication practices.
Earlier approaches to describing Chinese grammar tended to prioritize structural classification and rule presentation. More recent scholarship in pedagogical grammar calls for integrating form, meaning, use, and context, supported by accessible metalanguage and learner-centred design. This shift reflects a broader transition toward explaining how Chinese grammar can be effectively learned and taught.
In this context, the panel brings together researchers and practitioners to re-examine how Chinese grammar should be described, taught, and learned at the introductory stage. The contributions explore how grammar points can be selected, sequenced, and explained to address L1-related learning difficulties, incorporate pragmatic information, ensure terminological clarity, and connect explanations with purposeful practice. They also consider how teachers can make informed choices when designing or evaluating instructional materials.
By combining empirical insight with applied pedagogical solutions, the panel aims to advance more inclusive, transparent, and effective approaches to teaching Chinese grammar to novice learners in diverse European educational settings.
**Keywords:** Beginner-level Chinese teaching, Chinese pedagogical grammar, Didactic materials, L1-informed grammar teaching, Metalanguage in didactic materials

**Zuzanna Wnuk (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan)** – *Designing Chinese Grammar Descriptions for Beginner Learners in Europe: Examples from CHINGRAM project*
The description of Chinese grammar for teaching purposes has long been shaped by diverse traditions, from structuralist rule catalogues to more recent "Trinitarian Grammar" model or usage-based and form–meaning–use approaches (Li, 2022). While different approaches offer valuable insights, they sometimes fail to meet the needs of beginning learners in national educational contexts. This presentation examines how grammar points can be described in ways that are both linguistically sound and pedagogically effective for Chinese as a Second Language education in case of beginner learners. The presentation first reviews examples of different Chinese grammatical descriptions and identifies differences between linguistic and pedagogical grammars, which must prioritize clarity, relevance, and learnability (Yuan, He & Hu, 2023). It then identifies key components that should be included in the grammar description for didactic purposes, such as semantic and pragmatic explanation, clear structural patterns, typical usage contexts, contrastive L1-based explanations, and carefully chosen examples. Particular attention is given to the selection of appropriate metalanguage, arguing for terminology that is precise yet accessible to learners with different backgrounds. Finally, the presentation will show how these principles inform the structuring of grammar explanations in the currently developing ChinGram online platform, emphasizing its focus on meaning–structure-function integration, learner-oriented metalanguage, and needs of learners coming from a particular language background. By designing coherent, inclusive, and learner-oriented didactic materials, ChinGram project shows a way to address the needs of Chinese as a Second Language learners in Europe.
**Wisława Szkudlarczyk-Brkić (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan)** – *The CHINGRAM Project and Its Associated Challenges: Toward a New Model of Grammatical Description*
The goal of the CHINGRAM project is to create a digital grammar platform for European learners and to provide them with comprehensive descriptions of 100 grammatical items. One of the major challenges associated with this task is the development of a model of grammatical description that, on the one hand, reflects the typological features of the Chinese language (e.g. sensitivity to pragmatic rules) and, on the other hand, is useful for users whose L1 is an inflectional language, less sensitive to pragmatic factors.
Previous studies have confirmed that such typological differences between L1 and L2 may be a significant source of difficulties in SLA, therefore, developing instruction that provides complete information about the syntactic structure, pragmatic functions, and discourse-related constraints of the Chinese constructions is extremely important. To address this issue, a series of experiments (metalinguistic, production and introspective tasks) was designed to determine which elements of traditional grammatical descriptions are the most problematic for learners and what kinds of modifications can improve their understanding of the relevant issues. As a result, a new model of grammatical description was developed.
This presentation uses the example of presentational sentences to illustrate specific problems related to their grammatical descriptions in popular grammar books and to propose ways in which these constructions can be defined, categorized and described so as to make them more accessible to Polish learners. This multi-perspective approach to instruction can facilitate acquisition by increasing learners' awareness of discursive-pragmatic factors which are often insufficiently addressed in traditional grammar references.

**Serena Di Fusco (University of Naples "L'Orientale")** – *Chinese Grammar Platform (ChinGram): an experimental study with Italian L1 learners of Chinese.*

Learning resources for Chinese grammar are proliferating online, but high-quality resources in Italian remain comparatively scarce. This gap highlights the need for further research and pedagogical reflection on teaching and learning strategies specific to Italian L1 learners of Chinese (Morbiato, 2021; Tucci, 2017). Launched in December 2024, the Chinese Grammar Platform (ChinGram) project aims to enhance the quality of Chinese language learning through a multilingual digital platform, available also in Italian, offering grammatical descriptions, interactive exercises, and teacher-support materials. Designed by five European universities for elementary-level learners, the platform adapts its content to users' proficiency levels and linguistic backgrounds. The project will be completed by the end of 2026, and its pedagogical impact on both self-directed learning and formal instruction has not yet been systematically investigated. With the collaboration of native-speaker instructors at the University of Naples "L'Orientale", this paper aims to identify the "grammar points" (yǔfǎ diǎn 语法点) most challenging for Italian L1 learners, and then compares how these topics are explained in the textbook currently adopted in formal courses versus on the ChinGram platform. To assess whether and to what extent the platform's explanations support improved learning outcomes, an experimental study will be conducted: one group of students will learn the selected grammar points using ChinGram, while a control group will receive only traditional instruction. The results will offer evidence on the platform's effectiveness and provide insights into how digital, multilingual grammar resources can complement existing pedagogical practices.

[695] Yingfei Qiao (Shandong University of Technology). *The Dormancy of Deities: A Study on the Survival Mechanisms of the Dragon King Belief in Jingzi(靖子), 1945–1978.*

**Abstract.** Jingzi（靖子）, a peninsula fishing village in northern Weihai（威海）, underwent major changes after liberation in 1945, when the North District Working Group of the Chinese Communist Party in Weihaiwei City（中共威海卫市北区工作组）arrived to promote new policies. As a target of feudal superstition, the Dragon King belief was subjected to suppression. Several young fishermen, mobilized by the authorities, destroyed the Dragon King temple—a move that, amid sweeping social transformation, triggered a profound sense of disorder among local residents and gave rise to numerous tales in which the destroyers were punished by the deity and drowned at sea. These punitive narratives provided an outlet for collective anxiety and, through their pointed attribution of divine retribution, reinterpreted misfortune and restored symbolic order. Caught between public prohibition and genuine religious needs, villagers maintained the Dragon King belief through a mode of public secret, which included continuing to recount the living legend of the Goddess Sending Lanterns（娘娘送灯）in private settings, and tacitly permitting Ceremonies of Repayment Vows（还愿仪式） when individuals survived maritime disasters. The historical experience of Jingzi's Dragon King belief from 1945 to 1978 demonstrates the strong resilience of Chinese folk beliefs. Operating outside state policies, it provided explanations and meanings for everyday life, sustaining a sense of spiritual stability for ordinary people.

**Keywords:** Chinese Folk Beliefs, Dragon King Belief, Jiaodong Peninsula(胶东半岛), Weihai(威海)

[698] Federica Ceccarelli (University of Bologna - Alma Mater Studiorum). *A Queer Bestiary: Beast, Spirits and Nonhuman Creatures in Contemporary Sinophone Literature.*

**Abstract.** Representations of nonhuman creatures as tropes of nonconformity and queerness are not new to Chinese studies, as they can be associated to the beasts and spirits of the Strange Tales genre. My presentation aims to investigate whether and how contemporary Sinophone writers thematize the use of real and imaginary animals as queer narrative devices. This study adopts an interdisciplinary methodology that combines textual analysis and queer studies: it begins with an overview of animal iconographies in contemporary queer literature, encompassing examples like Qiu Miaojin's allegoric use of a crocodile, Lin Bai's depiction of a dog and Chi Ta-Wei's rewriting of the Little Mermaid. The review highlights the ways in which nonhuman creatures embody dynamics of fluidity, alterity, and subordination, and therefore might be understood as literary proxies of queer existence. The close reading focuses on Yan Geling's reinterpretation of the legend of the White Snake in a gendered perspective (Bai she 白蛇, 1998), with a focus on the textual peculiarities that reveal an attempt to blur boundaries between straight/queer sexuality and human/nonhuman behavior, such as the hybrid narrative style and the language used to describe the snake-spirited protagonist. This analysis emphasizes the narrative interplay between the iconography of the White Snake legend and the critique to power structures and hegemonic discourses. In this perspective, I argue that queer deployments of animals and nonhuman creatures in contemporary literature reveal a continuity with Chinese literary tradition and folklore, while simultaneously resonating with the epistemological

instances connected to the posthuman turn.
**Keywords:** Queer Sinophone Studies, Contemporary Sinophone Literature, Posthuman Studies

[699] Chi Feng (Indiana University, Bloomington), Clara Luhn (LMU München) and Christine Welch (Independent Scholar). *Offering Guidance through Narratives in Pre-modern Chinese Prose.*

**Abstract.** Planting ideas in people's minds, framing arguments in familiar forms, or giving the impression that insights originated with the interlocutor — narrative offers subtle means to guide a listener, reader, or interlocutor toward certain thoughts or actions. Spanning the Warring States to the early Qing, this panel examines how pre-modern Chinese authors employed narrative strategies in prose to provide guidance to readers, demonstrating that narrative and persuasion are often closely intertwined. Feng Chi situates narrative frames in Warring States anecdotes of remonstrance within their material contexts, arguing that these compositional strategies gave concrete form to otherwise abstract concerns of governance. Clara Luhn evaluates fire-related Tang and Song Dynasty tales, arguing that these narratives were not mere entertainment but offered practical guidance on fire prevention. And Christine Welch argues that the early Qing travel record, Pihai jiyou, employed an authorial pose of successful eyewitness to the immortal isle of Penglai to lend authority to its remonstrance-like essays, which advocated for more respectful treatment of Taiwan's natives. By situating narrative form within historical and material contexts, the panel demonstrates how pre-modern Chinese prose leveraged storytelling as a persuasive tool to shape attitudes and actions concerning politics, society, institutions, and cosmology, revealing its didactic potential. Our discussion further illuminates the central place of narrative persuasion in the Chinese literary tradition and its role in translating abstract principles into practical applications for audiences.
**Keywords:** narrative, persuasion, short prose, storytelling

**Chi Feng 馮馳 (Indiana University, Bloomington)** – *Casting a Large Bell: Material Frames of Argument in Warring States Texts*

A recurring narrative structure in Warring States texts starts with a ruler announcing his intention to "cast a large bell." Then, a minister offers remonstrance, and the outcome turns on whether the advice is heeded or not. This structure stages the tension between desire, counsel, and consequence. Previous scholarship has highlighted the importance of anecdotes as vehicles of philosophical and political argumentation, focusing primarily on literary form. Yet beneath these forms lie specific symbolic units that frame the narratives—why, for example, does the act of bell-casting serve as a trigger for argument?

I argue that such narrative frames are not incidental. They draw on recognizable material acts that could thus set the stage for admonition. In these anecdotes the bell is effective not only because of its symbolic associations, but because of its role in advancing the story: the act

turns a ruler's wish into a moment of remonstrance and, eventually, consequence. Bell-casting demanded unusual resources and carried overtones of ritual display and rulerly ambition. By tying political critique to it, the story gives concrete shape to otherwise abstract governance concerns. This perspective points to a dimension of argument that has received less attention: particular initiating acts help unfold the anecdote and externalize its moral force. In this sense, anecdotes may be seen not only as didactic tales or as static forms of argument, but as "scripts" whose persuasive effect depends on the recognizable acts initiating them.

**Clara Luhn (University of Munich)** – *Fire spirits: Understanding premodern fire hazards, their prevention, and contravention through medieval narrative*

This paper argues that medieval Chinese fire narratives served as important cultural instruments for communicating fire-related risks and practices in the increasingly urbanized society of the Tang and Song dynasties. In a historical context characterized by dense urban settlements, inflammable building materials, and minimal institutional firefighting infrastructure, fire posed a significant risk both for the individual and its immediate surroundings. Drawing on zhiguai and chuanqi tales from the 8th and 9th centuries selected from the collections Youyang zazu (9th century) and Taiping guangji (978 CE), my contribution centers on a body of stories that, in addition to entertaining the audience, conveys practical guidance on fire prevention, suppression, and domestic vigilance. These narratives often include supernatural elements and employ a variety of narrative strategies. The authors e.g. follow the structure of exempla, i.e., short, didactic tales that present experiential knowledge in a riddle structure that needs to be solved or interpreted by the recipient through actively transferring the single narrated instance to the general rule, or apply techniques such as peripheral persuasion, i.e., they craft

a narrative texture that reinforces normative behavior without offering explicit instruction. Examining these fire narratives and their narrative strategies not only facilitates a more profound understanding of premodern fire-

related risks and practices by pointing out everyday fire hazards or deliberating responsibilities. It also provides insight for understanding how premodern communities mediated environmental threats through narrative form.

**Christine Welch (Independent Scholar)** – *From Paradise to Practical Advice: A 1696 Taiwan Travelogue*

In 1696, a low-ranking administrative assistant in peripheral Fujian named Yu Yonghe set out on a voyage across the high seas to Taiwan, which had only "entered the map" of the Qing empire a decade before. Though his ostensible purpose was to mine and refine sulfur on Taiwan to replenish ammunition stores across the Strait, his literary travel diary, Pihai jiyou 裨海紀遊 (A Record of a Tour of the Encircling Seas) frames his journey as a jaunt to the unmoored isle of Penglai. Early historical texts such as the Shiji 史記 (Grand Scribe's Records) describe how rulers such as the First Emperor of the Qin and Emperor Wu of the Han had envisioned the eastern ocean as home to floating isles and had sent envoys there to seek out the elixir of immortality. Yu employs an authorial pose as eyewitness and daring adventurer to the previously unexplored "Penglai" (Taiwan) as a rhetorical strategy. The pose strengthens his authority and persuasiveness as eyewitness to the island, to advocate for the respectful treatment and cultural Sinicization of the natives of Taiwan. By contrasting his successful journey to Taiwan to historical examples of travel to Penglai (which parallel the contemporary administration's less-than-successful attempts at governance), Yu's travel diary acts as an indirect remonstrance, counseling a change in the Qing approach to Taiwan and its inhabitants.

[703] Silvia Schiavi (Roma Tre University), Martina Renata Prosperi (University of Wrocław) and Sara D'Attoma (University of Verona). *In the Name of the Mother, the Daughter, and the 'Infant Spirit': Rewriting Female Roles across Contemporary Sinospheres.*

**Abstract.** This panel brings together interdisciplinary perspectives from law, literature, and film studies to interrogate the mechanisms through which female roles are shaped, reiterated, and reinforced within patriarchal and state-mediated systems of power. Drawing on case studies from contemporary Sinophone literature and cinema, the panel addresses motherhood, reproductive regulation, gender-based violence, and maternal relationality, highlighting the role of artistic and literary creation in documenting gendered oppression and envisioning alternative feminist imaginaries. Sara D'Attoma analyses the socio-legal ramifications of China's population-planning policies on women's bodies, identities, and familial roles through Ma Jian's The Dark Road (2013). Martina Renata Prosperi shifts the focus to film studies, comparatively exploring works including Mommy (X. Dolan, 2014), The Florida Project (S. Baker, 2017), 好东西 / Herstory (Shao Yihui, 2024), and 女兒的女兒 / Daughter's Daughter (Huang Xi, 2024), to investigate how cinematic representations of mothers, daughters, and caregivers reconfigure ethics, relationality, and human-environment entanglement beyond patriarchal and anthropocentric frameworks. Silvia Schiavi examines contemporary Taiwanese poetry, interpreting Ling Yu's Daughters (2022) as a site where grief, family ethics, and women's subjectivity intersect to contest gender hierarchies, while also exploring female vulnerability as a locus of agency. Through these presentations, the panel seeks to foster a reflection on the capacity of art to amplify marginalized voices, opening pathways toward renewed forms of feminist resistance, solidarity, and self-determination.

**Keywords:** Family Planning, Ggender-based Violence, Feminist Relationality, Anti-patriarchal Discourse, Sinophone Literature

**Sara D'Attoma (University of Verona)** – *Silent Wombs: Gender, Law, and Reproductive Rights in Ma Jian's The Dark Road*

This presentation examines Ma Jian (1953-)'s The Dark Road (2013) through the dual lens of law and literature, using the novel as an interpretive site for understanding the socio-legal ramifications of China's population-planning policies on women's bodies, identities, and familial roles. Drawing on the historical and legislative framework reconstructed in the source text —including the evolution of the One-Child Policy, the enforcement mechanisms of local cadres, the hukou system, and the normative weight of Confucian patrilinearity— the analysis highlights how Ma Jian constructs a narrative of female subjugation situated between patriarchal expectations and state biopolitical control. Through the continually displaced, monitored, and marginalized figure of Meili, the novel highlights the forms of institutional harm embedded in reproductive regulation, ranging from mandated abortions and sterilizations to the commodification and loss of daughters. The novel operates as a critique of legal authority, demonstrating how law —rather than functioning as an impartial regulatory framework— manifests as a pervasive apparatus that shapes subjectivity, restructures kinship relations, and penetrates the most intimate dimensions of bodily autonomy. By setting Meili's fragile yet persistent resistance against broader cultural notions of motherhood, gender hierarchy, and nationalist imperatives, The Dark Road underscores literature's ability to reveal the embodied effects of authoritarian reproductive control and to return narrative agency to those marginalized by law

and patriarchal traditions.

**Martina Renata Prosperi (University of Wrocław)** – *The Mothers' Mothers: Resemantizing Motherhood Across Anthropocenic Cinemas*

This paper proposes a transcultural and transcorporeal reading of motherhood in the Anthropocene through a comparative analysis of Mommy (X. Dolan, 2014), The Florida Project (S. Baker, 2017), 好东西 / Herstory (Shao Yihui, 2024), and 女兒的女兒 / Daughter's Daughter (Huang Xi, 2024). Focusing on the Sinophone films while drawing parallels with Dolan's and Baker's works, it examines how cinematic representations of mothers, daughters, and caregivers reconfigure ethics, relationality, and human-environment entanglement beyond patriarchal and anthropocentric frameworks. The theoretical framework combines Jullien's notions of de-coincidence and the inaudible, Cavarero's reflection on contemporary feminism(s), and Alaimo's concept of trans-corporeality. Motherhood is approached as a space of rupture from the self, where the encounter with otherness becomes the occasion to approach the inaudible of existence. Across these films, maternal figures are fragmented and socially enmeshed; their gestures of care are collective and contingent, shared among neighbors, friends, and strangers. In Daughter's Daughter, even surrogate motherhood – an exploitative practice – is reimagined as a transcorporeal act of re-linking among women across generations and geographies. Ultimately, I argue that maternal experience is hereby conceived as an ethics of access: an ongoing movement toward alterity that resists any closure, or moral normalization. Indeed, the analyzed films suggest a world where motherhood becomes an epistemological gesture grounded in vulnerability and reciprocity; where daughters and mothers learn to relate otherwise, within renewed patterns of awareness and parity; where one might finally be(come) their mother's daughter, their daughter's mother, yet even their mother's mother.

**Silvia Schiavi (Roma Tre University)** – *Beyond Daughters: Female Agency and Resistance in Ling Yu's Nü'er*

Recent winner of the Newman Prize for Chinese Literature, Ling Yu (1952-) is one of the most influential voices in contemporary Taiwanese poetry. Her work explores a wide range of themes, often addressing women's emancipation and her experience as a woman and artist that challenges gender limitations. Her latest collection, Daughters (2022), stands out for its autobiographical tone and its exploration of female subjectivity, particularly the tension between filial duty, social expectations, and the pursuit of personal and artistic freedom. Written in the wake of her mother's death, the collection reflects on caregiving, family ethics, and loss, while articulating the shared experiences of the "daughters" of a patriarchal society still marked by gender inequality and stereotypes. Through close readings of selected poems, this paper investigates how Ling Yu's poetry engages with anti-patriarchal discourse and feminist aesthetics to portray the daily struggles of women striving to survive and transcend the constraints of contemporary society. By vividly depicting female sorrow, especially through the portrayal of her mother's illness, Daughters gives voice to women who deserve to be heard, reshaping vulnerability into an act of resistance and agency within both familial and broader social contexts.

[705] Hui Shi (University of Turku), Xiangpeng Meng (University of Turku) and Hanna Holttinen (University of Turku). *Chinese Language and Finnish Society: Learning, Teaching, and Using Mandarin Across Educational and Professional Contexts.*

**Abstract.** As Finland's engagement with China deepens across education, culture, and international business, the role of Mandarin Chinese in Finnish society is becoming increasingly significant. This panel brings together four complementary studies that examine how Mandarin is learned, taught, and used in Finland, offering an integrated perspective on Chinese language development in a Nordic context.

The first paper investigates motivational dynamics among Finnish university students pursuing a degree in Chinese, illustrating how intrinsic, integrative, and four other types of motivation shape sustained language commitment within a less-resourced educational setting. The second study explores how beginning Finnish learners acquire Chinese characters, focusing on strategy use, learner backgrounds, and the relationship between coping strategies and early learning performance. The third contribution examines multimodal pedagogy in Finnish Mandarin classrooms through analyzing classroom interaction, digital affordances, and teachers' and students' perceptions to establish a baseline of Mandarin teaching practices in Finnish higher education. Extending beyond educational contexts, the fourth paper investigates linguistic challenges faced by Finnish employees working in Chinese subsidiaries of Finnish multinational companies, highlighting how differing politeness norms and communicative expectations shape workplace interaction and intercultural understanding. Together, these studies demonstrate how Mandarin Chinese intersects with Finnish society at multiple levels: from university classrooms to corporate environments. The panel advances discussions on Chinese language education, cross-cultural communication, and the growing relevance of Mandarin in shaping Finland's international and multilingual landscape.

**Keywords:** Chinese language in Finland, Chinese as a foreign language, Learner motivation, Chinese character learning, Multimodal pedagogy, Intercultural communication, Finnish–Chinese interaction

**Hui Shi (University of Turku)** – *Cultivating Commitment: Exploring Motivational Dynamics in Finnish University Students Pursuing Chinese Language Studies*

This chapter examines the motivations of Finnish undergraduates pursuing a degree in Chinese language. An online survey investigates six motivation types—Integrative, Instrumental, Intrinsic, Extrinsic, L2 Self System, and Situational and Task Motivations—alongside seven aspects of learning experiences. Through a mixed-methods approach, the research analyzes motivation across academic years and uncovers developmental patterns. Quantitative findings indicate consistent dominance of Intrinsic and Integrative Motivations across all years, showcasing students' personal satisfaction and cultural interests. Instrumental Motivation fluctuates, highlighting career-oriented aspirations in the first and third years. Conversely, L2 Self System and Situational and Task Motivations remain low throughout the program. Qualitative analyses reveal universal and year-specific themes. Freshmen emphasize intrinsic curiosity and initial cultural engagement. Sophomores demonstrate balanced motivations, from interacting with native speakers to completing culturally rich assignments. Juniors focus on mastering complex tasks and aligning their goals with professional aspirations. This study extends our knowledge by examining language-learning motivation within a less-resourced degree-oriented program. While learners often express cultural interest and career aspirations, many currently lack clarity about the specific job responsibilities associated with a Chinese degree. The findings highlight the importance of pedagogical strategies that align with students' evolving motivations, particularly through immersive, authentic, and real-world-simulated learning opportunities.

**Keywords**: learner motivation, Chinese language education, integrative motivation, intrinsic motivation, instrumental motivation, Finnish education

**Xiangpeng Meng (University of Turku)** – *Learning Chinese Characters in Finland: Strategies of Beginning CFL Learners*

This study investigates the Chinese-character learning strategies employed by 20 Finnish A0–A1 learners of Chinese as a foreign language. It addresses three questions: (1) What strategies do beginning learners prefer when learning Chinese characters? (2) What factors influence the frequent or infrequent use of specific strategies? (3) Are there linear relationships between frequently used strategies and variables such as learning performance, L1 background, or age? Data are collected through a questionnaire that captures learners' linguistic background—age, native language, previously learned languages, and proficiency levels—and their strategy use across simulated learning scenarios. Follow-up interviews further probe learners' subjective perspectives, including reasons for preferring certain strategies, their perceived importance of character learning, and their broader motivations for learning Chinese. These interviews provide qualitative depth that complements the questionnaire results. The analysis examines how character-learning strategies correlate with personal backgrounds and early learning outcomes. By documenting the strategy of beginning Finnish learners, this study contributes to our understanding of Chinese-character learning in the Nordic context. The findings establish a basis for cross-regional comparisons and offer pedagogical insights for developing effective character-teaching practices for learners in Finland and the wider Nordic region.

**Keywords**: learning strategy; Chinese character; Chinese-character learning performance

**Hanna Holttinen (University of Turku)** – *Linguistic challenges of Finnish employees in the Chinese work environment*

This study investigates the linguistic challenges faced by Finnish employees working in Chinese subsidiaries of Finnish multinational companies (MNCs), focusing on how they navigate communication in linguistically and culturally distinct workplace environments. As China remains a major trade partner for Finland, the growing number of locally hired staff highlights the importance of effective multilingual and intercultural communication. Particular attention is given to linguistic politeness, as differing politeness norms influence clarity, hierarchy, and relationship-building at work. Previous research in international business communication often centers on limited company contexts and primarily English-medium interaction. By contrast, this study integrates pragmatics with business communication research to examine the understudied setting of Finnish–Chinese workplace encounters. Using a multi-method design combining ethnographic observation, semi-structured interviews, and survey data, the study triangulates findings to identify recurring linguistic challenges and the strategies employees employ to manage them. The analysis explores how Finnish and Chinese colleagues interpret and respond to differences in politeness norms, indirectness, and culturally shaped communication styles. The findings deepen understanding of the pragmatic and communicative complexities of Finnish–Chinese business interaction and underscore the need for

Finnish MNCs to adopt language- and culture-sensitive communication practices that support workplace efficiency and cross-cultural cooperation.
**Keywords**: workplace communication; linguistic politeness; intercultural pragmatics; multilingual workplaces; Finnish–Chinese business interaction

[707] Verna Yu (Birkbeck, University of London & University of Oxford). *Shattered Utopia: A Chinese Communist revolutionary couple's divergent intellectual transformation from the 1930s to 2000s.*
**Abstract.** This paper will examine the contrasting lives of Li Rui, a former secretary of Mao Zedong, and his first wife, Fan Yuanzhen. As students under the Nationalist regime in the 1930s, Li and Fan were both attracted by the underground Chinese Communist Party's promises of a utopia with democracy, freedoms, social and gender equality. Analysing the couple's diaries and personal correspondence, this paper will unpack the processes through which Li emerged as a vocal advocate of democracy while Fan became an orthodox party loyalist. This paper will seek to understand why party intellectuals took opposite trajectories during the Mao era (1949-1976) and probe into the roles of ideology and subjectivity in the lives of Chinese intellectuals of his generation. It will also investigate how Li and Fan negotiated through the tensions between their liberal longings and Marxist-Leninist beliefs in their pursuit of a Communist utopia. It will particularly examine the impact of CCP thought reform regime on Chinese intellectuals and complicate existing narratives of the state's relationship with intellectuals, the individual's subjectivity and gender politics in the People's Republic.
**Keywords:** Chinese Communist Party, utopia, ideology, thought reform, intellectuals, democracy, revolutionary women

[712] Gloria Gabbianelli (Università di Urbino Carlo Bo). *Rethinking CFL Vocabulary Instruction through Gamified Learning: University Students' Perceptions and Motivational Outcomes.*
**Abstract.** This study explores the pedagogical potential of game-based vocabulary learning in university-level Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) instruction. Grounded in theoretical frameworks that treat gamification as an emerging but debated approach, the research investigates the effectiveness of game-based learning in enhancing vocabulary acquisition, a well-known challenge in CFL education. Although prior studies report both positive (Qiao et al., 2022; Sánchez et al., 2021) and mixed effects (Hanus & Fox, 2015) of gamification, scholars highlight that its success depends on the integration of game design elements and sound pedagogical strategies (Qiao et al., 2024). Game-based learning has gained attention for its ability to improve vocabulary acquisition (Xu 2022; Zhou 2020). Evolving student habits, influenced by fast-paced digital content, highlight the need for more dynamic teaching methods. This study addresses the following research question: What are students' views on game-based Chinese vocabulary learning? Forty first-year students participated in an eight-week program, comprising two phases: four weeks of traditional paper-based vocabulary learning followed by four weeks of game-based learning, including daily asynchronous character-writing practice via a free app and weekly synchronous online game sessions. Quizizz,Wordwall, Padlet, and Chinese Writer apps were used for this study. Data were collected through pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, measuring motivation, perceived efficacy, pleasure/stress, learning habits, autonomy, and app usage. Results suggest that game-based learning was perceived more positively than traditional methods, with competitive elements not contributing to stress. Findings suggest that incorporating well-designed game elements within pedagogically sound frameworks can effectively support Chinese vocabulary instruction in higher education.
**Keywords:** game-based learning, Chinese as a Foreign Language CFL, vocabulary learning, learner motivation, learning autonomy

[713] Monika Arnoštová (Universität Duisburg-Essen), Marius Meinhof (Universität Bielefeld) and Grete Schönebeck (Universität Frankfurt). *Negotiating Work and Family Obligations in China.*
**Abstract.** The relationship between family and work in China has transformed under the rapid economic, social, and demographic change. In this context, questions of care, responsibility, work-life balance, as well as questions about the ability to improve the life of one's family through hard work have gained new relevance. This panel explores how relations between kinship/family and work are changing and are renegotiated in China. The panel situates these transformations within China's broader modernization processes, where traditional values of filial piety, collective belonging, and moral obligation interact with demands for productivity, efficiency and success. The panel will collect four papers on demands and obligations in work, family, and in struggles for work-family balance.
**Keywords:** Family, Work, Intergenerational Relations, Work-Family-Balance, Sociology

**Monika Arnoštová (Universität Duisburg-Essen)** – *Re-orienting Futures: Alternative Employment and Work-Life Balance among Shanghai's Youth*

Youth in China are confronting a convergence of macro-economic pressures that have driven youth unemployment to its current 17.3 %. However, scholars warn that the true figure remains higher. This environment fuels "involution" (内卷), a relentless competition in education and work that yields diminishing returns, and a growing awareness that the prosperity enjoyed by older generations may be out of reach. Young educated Chinese respond in diverse ways. Some enter the platform economy as delivery drivers or streamers, viewing these jobs as temporary solutions. Others adopt "lying flat" (躺平) by withdrawing from the labour market, while another segment pursues additional qualifications (master's or doctoral degrees) to postpone employment. A further group, often children of recently retired parents, become "full-time children" (全职子女), providing household support in exchange for modest allowances. This study investigates how Shanghai's educated youth (23-35 years, bachelor's degree or higher) negotiate work-life balance and alternative employment arrangements. Drawing on 30 in-depth interviews conducted in autumn 2024 across multiple industries, the research examines strategies for securing employment, the appeal of non-standard work models, and temporary labour-market exit. Particular attention is given to gendered dimensions of "lying flat" as a counter-strategy to intensified work and family pressures. Findings illuminate the evolving attitudes toward work, leisure, and familial responsibility among China's emerging generation.

**Marius Meinhof (Bielefeld University)** – *Negotiating filial obligations and boundaries of 'family' in China*

This presentation depicts statements on who belongs to the core of the "family" and which obligations emerge from this, based on an analysis of interviews and online discussions on intergenerational relations and filial piety. We show negotiations between, on the one hand, a vision of the core family as a conjugal couple plus their non-adult children and, on the other hand, a patrilinear notion where the core family are the descendants of a patriline that share one family name. I will exemplify the complex negotiations surrounding the question of family on statements about elder sisters' support for younger brothers which navigate complex relations of work and family, as well as competing notions of who the closest kin are. Based on this, I will discuss the limits of sociological concepts such as "nuclear family" for depicting these negotiations.

**Grete Schönebeck (Universität Frankfurt)** – *Care, Commerce, Cultural values and the question of individuality: Positionality of employers and employees in the Chinese funeral business*

The presence of death evokes unpleasant feelings in most people. In China, working with deceased is traditionally seen as inauspicious. Contact with dead bodies and everything connected to graves was seen as polluting. It could harm the living family, so it should be avoided. Though this perception has been labelled as superstitious, in 2014/15 it is still widespread among the general population and measures are taken to get rid of bad spirits after visiting a cemetery. At the same time, cemetery and funeral businesses are rising as prosperous enterprises. Are therefore economic reasons prevailing for the choice to work in the funeral business? Do families express concerns about a member that works at a cemetery? How can these concerns be mediated? For this paper, about 15 interviews with persons that have different professions in the funeral business are analysed. They narrate different life experiences and paths that led to their professional choice. They range from convicted criminals who want to atone for their past to sober young graduates of a funeral business degree. Perceptions of filial behaviour as it means taking care of one's parents in life and death become visible. Simultaneously, individuals who believe in the right to personal choice and in the opportunity to positive change by doing something new, position themselves in the changing China of the 2010s.

[715] Rui Zhang (Institut d'Asie orientale). *Inscribing Landscape: Movement, Dwelling, and Literati Self-Positioning in Zheng Daozhao's Rock Inscriptions.*

**Abstract.** How should rock inscriptions be read when key terms acquire meaning through both textual tradition and topographical setting? This paper approaches the inscriptions of Zheng Daozhao 鄭道昭 (455–516), a Northern Wei official whose work sheds light on broader early medieval Chinese practices of landscape, as situated texts in which philological interpretation must take into account the spatial arrangements that shape their use. While previous scholarship has primarily focused on calligraphy, textual content, or religious significance, this study foregrounds a philological reading of spatial and self-representational vocabulary. Drawing on the corpus assembled by the Altergraphy project, namely inscriptions from the four mountains associated with Zheng Daozhao, 1 it examines terms related to movement, dwelling, retreat, and interpretation, such as you 遊, ju 居, qi 栖, jie 解, as well as named spaces including tang 堂 and tai 臺. The paper asks how these terms draw on earlier textual traditions while acquiring specific force from their inscriptional and geographical contexts: peaks, caves, terraces, valleys, and ritual

sites. At the same time, it examines how inscriptions construct forms of literati self-positioning through the naming, inhabiting, traversing, and interpretation of landscape. Layout, orientation, and graphic distribution matter here: they inflect reading, guide the eye, and bind textual meaning to place. By combining close philological analysis with attention to emplacement, this paper argues that Zheng Daozhao's inscriptions turn landscape into a textual, interpretive, and self-fashioning space: a place to read, name, inhabit, and commemorate.
**Keywords:** Zheng Daozhao, rock inscriptions, philology, spatial reading, literati self-positioning, Northern Wei, early medieval China

[718] Jie Liu (University of Minho). *Reorganizing Confucian Knowledge for Children: An Epistemic Genealogy of Xiaoxue Ganzhu in the Song Dynasty.*
**Abstract.** As a representative mengxue (elementary learning) leishu (Classified Encyclopedias) compiled by Wang Yinglin (1223–1296) in the Southern Song dynasty, Xiaoxue Ganzhu served not only as an important textbook for children but also as a key link between the Confucian knowledge system and early primers. Its ten volumes and seventeen categories—covering astronomy, geography, statutes, official systems, and literature, encompass most branches of Confucian learning and reflect the pedagogical ideal of meng yi yang zheng, emphasizing broad and practical knowledge for moral cultivation. This study first traces the historical background of the Xiaoxue Ganzhu. Influenced by a constellation of factors, including the expansion of the imperial civil service examination system, the widespread diffusion of printing technology, and the rise of Neo-Confucian thought, mengxue texts thrived during the Song dynasty, laying the foundation for the institutionalization and systematization of children's education. Second, from the perspective of epistemic genealogy, the study analyzes the work's classificatory framework and the selection of its contents, illustrating how it reorganizes knowledge through a "category-governed" mode while inheriting the broader tradition of Chinese leishu. In doing so, it enables children to access the core of Confucian culture within a concise, orderly, and mnemonic structure.
The study concludes that Xiaoxue Ganzhu is not merely a pedagogical text for children but a crucial source for understanding the organization of Confucian knowledge and cultural transmission in premodern China.
**Keywords:** Mengxue, Leishu, Childhood Education, Epistemic Genealogy, Xiaoxue Ganzhu

[719] Qipa Wu (University of Zurich). *The Matriarch Is 18 Again: Age Inversion, Red Nostalgia, and the Cure for Digital Anxiety in the Transnational Micro-drama Hit.*
**Abstract.** Why has a micro-drama centred on a mathematician born in 1955 become a cultural sensation in an algorithm-driven world? This paper examines that paradox through The Matriarch: 18 Again (Shibasui tainainai jiadao), a series that has garnered more than eight billion domestic views and achieved record-breaking international sales of 150,000 USD per episode. Drawing on textual analysis, industry reports, and audience discourse (e.g. Douyin), I argue that its popularity stems from an existential unease specific to the algorithmic age, in which audiences seek relief from affective exhaustion by clinging to nostalgic imaginaries of epistemic certainty rooted in the Mao-era ideal of scientific rationality. By rebirthing a 1955-born female mathematician into the body of an 18-year-old in 2025, the narrative constructs a "Red Utopia" along three dimensions. First, the return of "Red Reason," where mathematical logic repairs the chaos of contemporary familial life. Second, the gamification of elder authority through age-swap, transforming filial piety into a playful power dynamic. Third, the alignment of private happiness with national ambition, as the family plot expands into patriotic aerospace achievement, thereby exporting Chinese family values as marketable soft power. Bringing Svetlana Boym's restorative nostalgia into conversation with Lauren Berlant's cruel optimism, the paper contends that the series operates not as a critique of digital alienation but as an analgesic optimized for it. The Matriarch offers fantasy solutions that momentarily ease the loneliness produced by the digital economy while effacing the structural conditions that render genuine familial repair so difficult today.
**Keywords:** Chinese Micro-drama, Algorithmic Culture, Red Nostalgia, Age Inversion, Soft Power

[721] Lorenzo Andolfatto (Academia Sinica), Aaron Moore (University of Edinburgh) and Tianyi Sheng (University of Edinburgh). *China's Martian Chronicles: Visions of the Red Planet in the Modern Chinese Imagination.*
**Abstract.** The red planet has always been visible to people in China, featuring in the cosmology of successive dynasties and their imagination about the celestial world. From the nineteenth century, however, new information about the planet, gleaned through innovations in Western optics, illuminated a new vista of the foreign world. As scientific information about outer space advanced, Chinese publications--newspapers, journals, and magazines, increasingly published in the vernacular--reported new discoveries, including science fiction and more dubious

'discoveries' that excited the popular imagination.
This panel investigates how Mars influenced Chinese literature and popular culture. First, we begin by looking at the transition from cosmology to astronomy, from the first amusing speculations about communicating with "canal" builders during the period of contact with the West. Then we explore how outer space became a fertile ground for young people's imagination, fueling visions of alternative realities to China's increasingly difficult present. Finally, we describe the impact of global science magazine culture, culminating in a horrifying vision of Martian bombardment during the Japanese invasion in WWII.
Mars was not simply a planet that attracted the attention of ordinary readers during the rise of mass social movements and popular vernacular literature, but also a prism through which writers could analyse some of the implications of these phenomena in the more terrestrial modern world. Our discussant will also introduce her work on the impact of H.G. Wells on modern Chinese literature, including the earliest translation of his Martian epic "War of the Worlds."
**Keywords:** science fiction, magazine culture, Mars, Republican literature, youth, astronomy

**Lorenzo Andolfatto (Visiting Academia Sinica)** – *Mars Fever! Conjecturing the Red Planet in Republican China from Canals to Fantastic World-building*
In 1877, following astronomical observations of Mars as it transited in opposition to the Earth, Italian astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli reported the presence of canali on the red planet's surface. This discovery, amplified by English mistranslations that turned naturally occurring "channels" into hypothetically artificial canals, ignited a long-lasting fascination with Mars, which peaked with the so-called "Mars fever" at the turn of the century. This fever eventually reached the Chinese shores, engendering heated debates on the natural features of Mars and on whether it hosted civilizations that were comparable to humanity on Earth. Though less acute than in its first bouts in Europe and the US, the Mars fever lasted longer on Chinese soil, flaring up regularly on the pages of newspapers and periodicals from the early 1900s to the late 1920s, as well as in the occasional novel and short story. The present paper aims to retrace the development of this phenomenon, from the early Chinese translations of Lowell's Mars and Its Canals to later conjectures about Martian hedao 河道, the advanced civilizations that built them, and the possibility of interplanetary communication. What emerges from this brief interlude of extraterrestrial speculation, after its wildest claims were debunked by later and more accurate observations, is an imaginary of Mars as an ideal if not utopian foil to humanity's aspirations on Earth.
**Tianyi Sheng (University of Edinburgh)** – *Mars Dreams! Youthful Ambition and Cosmic Mobility in Republican Chinese Imagination*
This paper argues that Republican-era Mars-travel narratives aimed at student-age readers constituted a distinctive imaginative arena; in this new literary space, authors fashioned modern Chinese youth as scientific subjects capable of projecting futures beyond the confines of their personal circumstances and the nation's fraught historical moment. I examine youth-oriented science fiction, student compositions, and Chinese translations of Japanese juvenile science tales newly illustrated by local artists—texts and comics frequently bearing titles describing "adventures" or "playing" on Mars. The corpus brings into focus the ways curiosity, whimsical fantasy, and scientific aspirations coalesced to propose new formulations of youth agency by making interplanetary travel startlingly simple: a stray thought in class, a homemade flying device, or a casual family conversation suddenly transported young protagonists to the red planet. The narratives abandoned technical detail in favor of tracing how youth became scientific subjects, spotlighting what young travelers reported enduring, seeing, naming, and discovering on Mars, and the recognition—both professional and public—they hoped these claims would secure. Produced at a time of foreign threats, material scarcity, and restricted mobility, these Mars voyages offered more than escapist fantasy. They articulated an imaginative strategy for compensating for China's limited technological infrastructure, recasting the young explorer as a figure who could leap beyond terrestrial constraints and embody a speculative, wonder-driven vision of China's scientific future.
**Aaron William Moore (University of Edinburgh)** – *Mars Attacks! Using the Red Planet to Talk about the Experience of War in China*
This paper examines how Mars came to represent not only a site of utopic or other-worldly possibility, but a site for struggle at a time when Republican China was facing considerable instability and threat of foreign invasion. First, I situate fantasies about Mars in the broader context of foreign literary and scientific influence, drawing from examples of publications in Britain, Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union. Second, by explaining how 1920s and 1930s magazine publishing popularized both speculative writing and foreign knowledge, I describe how China's publishing culture created amusing, threatening, and even plausible scenarios for human engagement with extra-

terrestrial life. Finally, I conduct a close reading of Chen Yuesheng's largely forgotten serial fiction story, "The Martian Cannon" (火星人的大砲) in the influential science magazine Science Illustrated (科學畫報) at the end of WWII, to show how visions of Mars can reveal cultural understandings of China's war experience under KMT leadership. Mars therefore emerges not only as a planet defined by new astronomical knowledge, but a space for popular understandings of national agency, wartime suffering, and military strategy.

[722] Runya Qiaoan (Palacky University). *Running from the Center: Youth Disengagement and Quiet Resistance through "Lying Flat".*

**Abstract.** In recent years, China has undergone a notable transformation in its political and social landscape, characterized by the consolidation of political authority and a narrowing of the space for civil society. These shifts have sparked renewed scholarly interest in how forms of public expression, resistance, and community-building adapt under such conditions. While it is often assumed that the party-state does not tolerate mass mobilizations, scholars such as James Scott have highlighted that in many non-Western contexts, resistance frequently takes subtle and non-confrontational forms. In China, recent waves of youth-led cultural phenomena illustrate this point, as they challenge prevailing societal norms without fitting neatly into conventional frameworks of social movements. The "lying flat" movement—an ethos of passive resistance against the pressures of overwork and reproduction offers rich material for examining evolving forms of quiet resistance. Drawing on discourse analysis of social media posts and narrative analysis of firsthand interview data, this study examines how emerging social norms among youth are translated into emotions conveyed in discourse and narratives, revealing new meaning structures within China's civil sphere. These micro-level practices, although not overtly political, reveal deeper forms of disengagement and a desire for transformation, offering valuable insights into the social undercurrents of the Xi Jinping era.

**Keywords:** passive resistance, social norms, lie-flat, civil sphere

[723] Melinda Pirazzoli (Universitas Mercatorum). *On Haptocentrism, Olfactocentrism and Ocularcentrism: A Transmedial Reading of 推拿 Tuina.*

**Abstract.** This presentation aims to compare Bi Feiyu's 毕飞宇(1964) novel 推拿 Tuina (2008) and Lou Ye's 娄烨 (1965) film of the same name. Both works recount the lives of a group of blind people who live and work in a massage centre where a form of massage known as Tuina is practised. While there are some similarities between the novel and the film, the ways in which characters relate to one another differ radically. In his novel, Bi Feiyu offers a haptocentric and olfactometric perspective on life. As Jacques Derrida points out in On Touching – Jean Luc Nancy (2005), touch is the most carnal of the senses because it is experienced in and through the flesh, while scent and smell are experienced at a distance. Although the protagonists initially perceive their blindness as a major impediment to a fully lived life, their heightened sensory acuity allows them to form a community grounded in affect. As Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (2010) suggest, affect is not an abstract concept: "it is found in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds." The film, by contrast, cannot replicate this sensory world: smell and touch are not easily represented on screen. While the movie conveys a muted sense of community, it is overshadowed by a lingering feeling of hopelessness shared by all the members of the blind community.

**Keywords:** Bi Feiyu, Tuina, Haptocentrism, Ocularcentrism, Olfactocentrism

[724] Arden Chao (MF Norwegian School of Theology), Vincent Mu-Chien Chen (École des hautes études en sciences sociales) and Amira Jia He (Chinese University of Hong Kong). *Between State and (Wo)men: Negotiating the Space for Religion in Modern and Contemporary China.*

**Abstract.** From the "national spirit" to the "opium for the people," the place of religion in the modern world has long occupied much of Chinese intellectuals' attention. Indeed, the Republican ideal of secularism and the PRC's atheist position have been the overarching structure that dominates political discourses. However, many believers have continued their religious practices amid the capricious political environment. Even some statesmen and stateswomen are known for being avid practitioners despite their official capacities. In short, religion in modern and contemporary China is less a stable, fixed concept than a space where people constantly negotiate its boundaries, meanings, practices, and ultimately, legitimacy.

To explore the various ways believers interact with the state, this panel proposes three case studies that approach this topic from three different angles. For a start, Chao argues that faith in "science" among many Chinese intellectuals relies heavily on the existing religious structure, despite claims of enlightenment and secularism.

Chen's study on a female Muslim legislator of the ROC rather questions the common assumption of secularism as detrimental to Muslim religiosity. Finally, He's paper examines how Hui women in the Northwest today navigate through religious, ethnic, and gender identities with their choice of clothing. Taken together, this panel seeks to highlight the intersection of religion and science, gender, and ethnicity, thereby inviting fruitful conversations through interdisciplinary interventions.
**Keywords:** Religious Policies, state-religion relations, Secularism, Religion and the Public Sphere, Anti-Superstitious campaigns

**Arden Chao (MF Norwegian School of Theology)** – *Beyond Disenchantment: The Reconfiguration of Religion in Modern China's Secularization*
In modern China's political discourse, "science" came to occupy the position once held by the Mandate of Heaven: an unchallengeable source of legitimacy and truth. From the Kuomintang's "most scientific Three Principles" to the Communist Party's "scientific socialism," political actors invoked science not as a method but as an ultimate authority. Existing scholarship treats this either as a misunderstanding of science ("scientism") or as a consequence of colonial trauma, yet neither explains the specific mechanism by which science crossed the threshold from a widely trusted epistemology to a structurally unquestionable political foundation. This article argues that the mechanism lies in an inherited epistemological architecture. The Neo-Confucian tradition had long operated a structure in which rational inquiry was actively encouraged while the foundation—the existence of a unified, necessary moral-cosmological order—remained beyond the reach of that same inquiry. Challenges to the foundation registered not as legitimate dissent but as the challenger's methodological failure. When "science" entered Chinese intellectual life, it was grafted onto this architecture: the surface invited analysis, while the ground (first natural law, then historical inevitability) absorbed the older structure's immunity to questioning. The article tracks this grafting through late Qing translation, the 1923 Science-Metaphysics Debate, and the KMT-CCP competition over rival claims to scientific authority. This framework speaks directly to the panel's concern with negotiating religion's space: the most consequential negotiation was not between believers and the secular state, but within the state's own epistemological foundations—where a religious structure was not eliminated but reconfigured, producing certainty through rational procedure rather than through faith, yet remaining no less immune to questioning.
**Vincent Mu-chien Chen (EHESS)** – *The Invisible Hijab? The Many Images of a Female Muslim Legislator in the Republic of China*
An independent girl in the family, a propaganda artist in the National Revolutionary Army, an educator in many schools, an active politician to her constituents, a devoted matron to her Muslim coreligionists, or even an evil agent in the eyes of her Communist rivals—Tong Dao-yun (1903–1996), one of the first female legislators in Modern China, has long evaded scholars' attention despite her astonishingly prolific career. Indeed, her centrality in the Nationalist Party makes it difficult to fit her into the "Huizu" narratives in today's PRC. Nevertheless, her conspicuous hijablessness in political space might have been the reason she is inconspicuous to historians of Muslims in China as well. Furthermore, what could be surprising to us is the fact that those close to Tong remember her exactly as a pious Muslim who always encourages hijab wearing in her everyday life. Focusing on the political image (and literally images) of Tong, this article seeks to explore the kind of visual regime in the Republican era, a world that functioned differently from identity politics (à la the United States) in our time. In fact, by playing ball with state secularism, the usual enemy in discourses of religious freedom, Tong was able to pose herself both as an authentic "Republican lady" and a devout Muslim woman without being accused of being incoherent. Her unexpected agency, in a broader context, can thus help us reflect upon the possible limits of various multiculturalist paradigms that dominate our research field today.
**Amira Jia He (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)** – *The Hat Is Close to Her Heart: Re-illustrating the Image of Married Hui Women in Ningxia*
In Ningxia, the "white hat" (bai maozi in Chinese, which is, in fact, blue in practice) worn by Hui women after getting married exists outside the dichotomy between hijab-wearing (which many Hui regard as "religious and/or pious") and unveiledness (seen as better educated but often lacking in religious knowledge) as it is not designed to completely cover the hair; Hui women usually leave their bangs out when wearing it. On the one hand, it signifies "cleanness" and serves as one of the key identity markers that distinguish the Hui from the Han. Meanwhile, it bears the moral expectations that Hui communities have for married women. For example, women who wear the white hat are not encouraged to wear clothes that draw extra attention, such as skirts, or go to places that are deemed inappropriate, such as karaoke. And the younger generation tends to wear it only on certain occasions,

such as Eid and funerals. What does wearing the white hat mean for Hui women compared to wearing the hijab or not covering the hair? What kind of image do they show? How has wearing the white hat shaped and reflected Hui women's lived experiences? In trying to answer these questions, this research examines the reasons why and how Hui women wear the white hat in contemporary Ningxia, arguing that it represents the intersection of faith, aesthetics, and ethical demands in Hui women's dressing choices.

[731] Maria Khayutina (University of Munich). *Cities of the Chinese Bronze Age.*

**Abstract.** Large cities with surface areas up to several hundred hectares developed in China already during the late Neolithic period. During the Bronze Age (ca. 2000-500 BCE), under the influence of environmental and economic factors, political landscapes were reconfigured and centers of urbanization shifted. The seats of the so-called "Three Dynasties" in the lower courses of the Yellow and Wei rivers, as well as lesser political centers in other regions, such as the Loess Plateau and the Yangzi valley, became places of residence for dense, heterogeneous, and highly stratified populations. Since the beginning of the present century, Chinese archaeologists have increasingly invested in large-scale surveys and excavations of Bronze Age cities, revealing complex, planned layouts featuring fortifications, monumental architecture, transportation and water-supply infrastructures, specialized ritual and craft-production zones, residential quarters, and cemeteries. The excavated materials provide new clues for understanding the political economies, social organizations, and cultural patterns of pre-imperial China.
This panel brings together field and desk archaeologists, specialists in epigraphy, and historians to take stock of the currently available archaeological and epigraphic sources and to address, among others, the following topics:
b) political and economic functions of cities;
a) principles of urban planning reflected in cities' layouts;
c) social and cultural composition of urban populations;
e) regional settlement hierarchies;
f) Bronze Age legacy for later urbanization processes
The panel intends to stimulate critical debate and to foster interdisciplinary cooperation within the field of Early China studies.
**Keywords:** Bronze Age, Urbanization, Capitals, Three Dynasties, Shang, Zhou, Anyang, Panlongcheng, Sanxingdui, Zhouyuan

**Bin Cao (Renmin University of China)** – *New Archaeological Discoveries and Political Functions of the Capital Cities of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou Dynasties*

In recent years, archaeological discoveries at the capital cities of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou have achieved major breakthroughs. At Erlitou, a grid-style road network and enclosing walls of independent courtyard compounds have been uncovered; within each grid-like area, palaces, tombs, sacrificial pits, and handicraft workshops have been unearthed. At Zhengzhou, new finds include storage remains, water-management facilities, bronze-smelting and bone-working workshops, sacrificial sites, and high-ranking tombs. At the Yanshi Shang City site, besides the royal palace city and warehouses, a granary cluster has been excavated; roads, city gates, and a water-system network running through the Large City, Small City, and Palace City—have also been discovered. At the Huanbei Shang City site and the Yinxu, newly excavated handicraft remains can be identified as independent industrial zones; at the Royal Cemetery, two enclosing ditches dating to the late Shang (surrounding the eastern and western royal cemeteries) and more than 460 sacrificial pits have been uncovered. At the Zhouyuan site, three lines of city walls (for the Palace City, Small City, and Large City) and new large-scale rammed-earth foundations have been revealed. These discoveries are significant for reassessing the defensive structures, palace layouts, road and water networks, tomb and sacrificial systems, and handicraft production in Bronze Age capitals. This paper examines these findings and offers new insights into the political and economic functions of capitals during the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties.

**Changping Zhang (Wuhan University)** – *Transformation of Modes of Control: A Perspective from a Local Urban Centre*

The China's early dynasties from Erligang period (1600–1300 BC) to Yinxu period (1300–1100 BC), show a reduction in the territorial scope of royal control, while bronze industry reached its zenith. This phenomenon might be understood through the abandonment of Panlongcheng at the end of Erligang. Panlongcheng was a settlement entirely established by the Central Plains' cultural tradition. Over its roughly 300 years of occupation from 1600 to 1300 BC, it grew from a small settlement into a regional centre exerting control over the middle reaches of the Yangtze River. As a local hub directly administered by the Erligang polities of the Central Plains, Panlongcheng oversaw the establishment of secondary pint-sized centres and villages throughout the region. When Panlongcheng was abandoned around 1300 BC, these subordinate settlements also disappeared. It is thus suggested that Central Plains culture exercised a mode of administrative control over the middle Yangtze through direct governance.

Following the abandonment, a new centre—Guoyuanzui —emerged some 20 km to its north. This implies that people from Central Plains was no longer directly administering the middle Yangtze region; rather, they and local groups remained as close allies through the output of bronze casting techniques. For the early dynasties, the shift from direct to indirect control reflects changes in their administrative strategies within the context of a territorial state. This transition enabled Central Plains to effectively acquire diverse resources such as metal, and ultimately contributed to the peak of bronze civilization during the late Yinxu period.

**Yung-Ti Li (University of Chicago)** – *Mapping the Living Space: Spatial Analysis of Architectural Remains at the Last Shang Capital Anyang*

Anyang archaeologists and historians alike have attempted to examine the settlement pattern and the spatial organization of the last Shang capital. The most prevalent model is that the Anyang urban center consisted of lineage-based settlements and cemeteries. Such a model is based on historiographic descriptions and on the assumption that glyphs inscribed on bronzes represent clan or lineage insignias. As bronzes with such inscriptions are found in cemeteries, it is widely postulated that these signs indicate that the spatial configuration of cemeteries and therefore that of the settlements were based on lineage organizations, i.e. kinship. It is not the goal of this paper to review the prevalent but circular argument of the lineage-based settlement and cemetery system. It seeks to approach the issue of urban spatial organization at Anyang from an archaeological and comparative perspective by examining the architectural remains in the context of household archaeology, especially through analytical means such as spatial syntax, viewshed analysis, and circulation and accessibility patterns. It is argued in this paper that only through analysis of the living space, not the mortuary space, can we understand the spatial-social organization of the Bronze Age metropolis.

**Yanjun Wang (University of Munich)** – *Planning Concepts of the Yi-Sectors at the Great Settlement Shang*

As the capital of the Late Shang period, the “Great Settlement Shang” (Da Yi Shang) featured multiple rectangular timber-framed ritual and residential buildings at Xiaotun on the southern bank of the Huan River as its core. It was surrounded by centripetally distributed settlement sectors known as yi, featuring an integrated layout combining habitation, burial, and production. This paper categorizes these structures by architectural form—such as subterranean, semi-subterranean structures, ground buildings, and platform constructions—and by function, including dwellings and workshops. Using methodology from settlement archaeology and incorporating the currently known water channel systems and road networks at Yinxu, this study aims to explore specific planning concepts, and obtain a deeper understanding towards urban settlement planning in the Late Shang capital.

**Haichao Li (Sichuan University)** – *A Tale of Two Cities: The Sanxingdui and Jinsha Sites from Multiple Perspectives*

The Sanxingdui and Jinsha sites are arguably the two most significant Bronze Age archaeological discoveries in Southwest China. Located merely 40 kilometers apart, these two urban-type sites have long attracted academic attention regarding their relationship. Previous mainstream scholarship often posited a sequential relationship between them, suggesting that after the decline of Sanxingdui, its population migrated to Jinsha and established a new center. However, recent archaeological findings and newly published materials indicate that the actual situation was far more complex. The roles and relationship between the two sites continually evolved across different periods. A long-term observation of their dynamic interactions from multiple perspectives—economic, religious, and political—is essential to a genuine understanding of this issue. From a religious standpoint, although both sites contain sacrificial zones and elite artifacts, such as bronzes, goldware, and jades, their sacrificial practices were fundamentally different. In terms of craft production, the bronze industry at Jinsha shows a marked decline compared to that of Sanxingdui—what might account for this shift? Regarding cultural interaction, the complex network of exchanges observed between Sanxingdui and other cultures does not appear to have been replicated at Jinsha. Were these differences the result of functional distinctions or historical processes? This study will focus on the Bronze Age and present a periodized "tale of two cities" in the ancient Shu region.

**Maria Khayutina (University of Munich)** – *Zhou-under-Qi in the system of Western Zhou capitals*

Following Sima Qian’s account in the Shi ji, historians assume that the Zhou kings had their main capital in Feng-Hao near present-day Xi’an and a secondary capital in Chengzhou near Luoyang. During the 20th century, accidental finds and trial excavations indicated that Zhou-under-Qi, believed to be the predynastic capital of Zhou and located some 120 km further west of Xi’an, continued to thrive throughout the entire Western Zhou period instead of being abandoned. Since the late 1990s, systematic archaeological investigations conducted by the Shaanxi Archaeological Institute, Peking University, and the Baoji Museum have gradually revealed a large urban settlement featuring several nested city walls and moats, water channels and artificial ponds, palatial architecture of diverse layouts and functions, craft workshops, residential areas and cemeteries, as well as numerous hoards of bronze vessels. Despite its evident scale and complexity, only a few scholars have so far recognized Zhou-under-Qi as the main political

center of the Zhou kings. This reluctance can be partly explained by the veneration of Sima Qian and partly by an unwillingness to acknowledge a major shift that would require adjustments to schoolbooks and museum exhibitions. The present paper provides an overview of recent discoveries and scholarly debates and proceeds to substantiate the role of Zhou-under-Qi as the principal Zhou capital on the basis of archaeological data and excavated epigraphic materials.

**Lothar von Falkenhausen (UCLA)** – *Urban Growth on the Margins of the Chinese Culture Sphere (ca. 550-250 BC)*

Xu Hong's monumental conspectus of currently available archaeological evidence concerning early Chinese cities (Xu 2017) for the first time provides a solid basis for examining regional trends during what has been characterized as "China's Second Urban Revolution" after about the middle of the first millennium BC.

The present paper presents some observations from the northern and southern frontier areas of the Chinese culture sphere and endeavors to characterize their socioeconomic and political significance.

[735] Shoufeng Liu (University of Cambridge), Renru Xiaoqi Tang (Lancaster University) and Mengyuan Tian (University of Cambridge). *Money in Belief: The Economy of the Sacred in Contemporary Chinese Religions.*

**Abstract.** This panel explores the political economy of Contemporary Chinese religious practice, challenging the conceptual separation between the sacred realm and secular market dynamics. We argue that the operation, institutionalisation, and vitality of belief systems are profoundly shaped by economic involvement and capital flow at personal, institutional, and national level, demonstrating a dynamic relationship between money and belief in contemporary China. The panel presents three comparative studies:

1. Focusing on grassroots religious vendors, Shoufeng Liu examines how villagers lacking explicit religious identities at sacred sites like Mount Jingzhong act as key motors sustaining religious vitality. Through fierce price competition and reinvention of religious products such as large incense sticks, they regenerate the sacred flow amid the mountain's administrative closure.
2. Examining institutional legal frameworks, Renru Xiaoqi Tang addresses the institutional dimension by tracing the modern legal and financial identity of Buddhist monastics. This study analyzes the historical tension between the traditional Buddhist precepts of prohibiting the pursuit of money and the modern citizen's right of private property and monetary legal liability, thereby defining the identity and legal status of Buddhist monastics in contemporary economic society.
3. Analysing state fiscal and political control, Mengyuan Tian examines the state-driven Yellow Emperor cult. This paper maps the funding shift from initial private capital to centralised State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) control and analyses revenue sources (e.g., tourism, cultural product sales) against religious and personnel costs.

Collectively, from the perspective of grassroots market mechanisms, institutional legal frameworks, and state fiscal policy, these papers demonstrate how economic systems are integral components that structure, transform, and fuel modern Chinese religious expression.

**Keywords:** Sacred and Secular Market, Grassroots Religious Vendors, Institutionalisation, Buddhist Monastics, Popular Religion, Religion and Law, State-Owned Enterprise

**Shoufeng Liu (Cambridge University)** – *Villagers Reignite the Sacred: Competition and the Religious Economy of Mount Jingzhong*

Studies on the transformation of temple-based religion into scenic areas have mainly focused on devotees, "religious providers" (e.g., monks, Daoist priests, ritual specialists, scenic-area staff, etc.), and sometimes local officials. However, villagers who earn a living by selling religious products around temple sites have received insufficient scholarly attention. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork at Mount Jingzhong, a sacred mountain in Hebei Province east of Beijing, this paper suggests that although such villagers lack explicit religious identities, they have actively and profoundly shaped local religious-economic practices, positioning themselves as an important motor sustaining the vitality of religious culture. The paper examines villagers' choices of religious products, religious discourse, competitive mechanisms, and pricing strategies. When Mount Jingzhong was temporarily closed in 2024 due to management issues, villagers introduced new products such as large incense sticks over 1.5 meters tall, as well as paper golden ingots and treasure boxes. While selling, they strategically integrated fragmented religious discourses from local traditions and the internet. Notably, fierce price competition emerged among the villagers, driving incense prices down from ¥666 on the mountain to ¥70 or even less, which significantly reduced pilgrims' expenses. Eventually, large incense sticks completely replaced ordinary ones, forming a new modality of worship. Villagers also sold previously banned ingots and treasure boxes at very low prices, enhancing the mountain's reputation and efficacy in granting wealth. Amid the crisis of Mount Jingzhong's closure, villagers renewed and sustained the flow of religious energy, ultimately creating a new religious sphere at the mountain gate.

**Renru Xiaoqi Tang (Lancaster University)** – *The Private Property Rights and Monetary Legal Liability of Modern Chinese Buddhist Monks (from 1912 to present)*

This study discusses private property rights and monetary responsibilities of modern Buddhist monks in China. According to early Buddhist Vinaya, monks were required to refrain from holding money and private property. However, as Buddhist Vinaya were introduced to China relatively late after the Buddhist sutras, Chinese Buddhist monastics had not yet developed a tradition of abstaining from money. Instead, according to the Mahayana Bodhisattva precepts and monastic practices, Chinese Buddhist monastics have long maintained a tradition of holding money and saving private property. Their private property primarily came from rewards from the ruling court, gifts from the nobles, offerings from believers, living allowances from monasteries, and personal income for labour (such as intellectual property by writing, painting, calligraphy, etc). However, with the end of the imperial dynasty and the beginning of modernization, the concepts of 'citizenship' and 'rule of law' were introduced into China from the West. In this context, radical and progressive Buddhists and Buddhist monks began to modernize Buddhism, thus, Chinese Buddhism has undergone significant changes. Accordingly, Buddhist monks have more diversified sources of private income. At the same time, under the modern economic system and religious policies, while they enjoy personal income, they also bear corresponding financial legal responsibilities. By exploring these diverse sources of income and legal obligations in the comparison between Buddhist precepts and state laws, as well as analyzing related legal cases, this paper aims to provide an understanding of the identity and status of Buddhist monks in contemporary Chinese society.

**Mengyuan Tian (Cambridge University)** – *Fiscal Politics and the Ancestral Brand: The Capital Flow and Ritual of the Yellow Emperor Cult (1980–Present)*

This paper analyses the political economy of the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi) ancestral cult from 1980 to the present, focusing on the dynamic interaction between belief and capital across the three key contention sites: Shaanxi, Henan, and Zhejiang. Revenue streams examined include individual donations and sponsorships, government fund operations, scenic area income from tickets and incense, and sales of goods such as sacrificial items, traditional souvenirs, and cultural and creative products; while key expenditures involve personnel wages and religious costs, alongside points of conflict like auctions and the consumption of incense. The mechanism of "Money Supports the Belief" involves funding shifts from private individual donations and operations to the state, via State-Owned Enterprises and National Finance; conversely, the "the Belief Turns into Money" strategy monetises the ritual through individual naming/sponsorships, government investment attraction, fund operation via foundations, and leveraging cultural and tourism industry revenues.

The study maps the temporal evolution of funding, which reflects the state's tightening control: initial private capital (1990s) used to bootstrap local popular religions has been progressively replaced by state-approved commercial tenders and centralised, State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) operation (2010s). This

study argue that this state-endorsed veneration is governed by a persistent paradox: it requires massive state and elite investment, yet frequently results in a net economic loss, prioritising political legitimacy and merits over immediate profit. While direct financial return is often secondary, the ritual is maintained as a crucial strategic asset: a platform to boost tourism, attract investment, and develop cultural industries.

[736] Boyao Zhang (Leiden University) and Jessie Morgan-Owens (Leiden University). *The Mirror That Retains My Likeness-- Chinese Literati's Responses to Early Photography.*

**Abstract.** Chinese people's responses to photography when it was first introduced to China (1840s-1870s) remains an understudied subject. Moreover, existent research mainly looks through the lens of Westerners' writings whilst Chinese people's own writings on this topic have been inadequately discussed until recent years. Nineteenth-century Westerners often suggested that Chinese people either showcased a sheer superstitious antagonism against photography, or a rather superficial understanding of the medium. Nevertheless, with recent re-discoveries of Chinese literature on this subject we start to see a more multi-facet picture. In this research, I will give a close reading of some Chinese literati's writings about their encounters with photography. In so doing, I argue that these Chinese literati have come up with an understanding of photography that is at once "conventional" and "modern". On the one hand, I will show how the repertoire of classical Chinese and classical Chinese epistemology widely functioned as a point of departure for the Chinese literati to compare, make sense of, as well as appropriate photography. On the other hand, I will also demonstrate that despite all those traditions evoked, the Chinese literati also keenly captured through their writings certain ontological differences regarding photography which cannot be found in any pre-existent epistemological framework. Consequently, I contend what these Chinese writings offer to us is a vivid record of the tension between an inertia of assimilation and a spontaneity towards establishing a

whole new discourse of the novel medium in the early days of photography in China.
**Keywords:** Photography in China, Word and Image, Art History, Interculturality

[737] Flora Ang Xu (New York University). *Temporalization beyond Teleology: Delineation of "East Asian Traumatic Society".*

**Abstract.** This paper examines the viral topic of "East Asian Traumatic Society (东亚创伤社会)" on Xiaohongshu, where users mobolize western psychological and psychoanalytic vocabulary through personal narratives, framing East Asian society under Confucian influence as repressive and "traumatic." While such critique is not new, the New Culture Movement also challenged Confucianism through its aspiration toward "modernity." This study asks how today's critique differs from earlier ones by drawing on digital ethnography that combines semi-structured interviews with online discourse analysis. Building on Pheng Cheah's distinction between teleology and temporalization—the former treating time as the unfolding of predetermined ends, the latter as an open-ended becoming—this paper reexamines the temporality of self-reflexive critique through the use of Western theoretical frameworks in both the New Culture Movement and today's "East Asian Traumatic Society" discourse. While Rey Chow reads the former as a teleological self-denunciation that reaffirms the logic of progress, I argue that the latter reveals a more complex relation between residual teleology and emergent temporalization—a condition of "incomplete modernization" in which "trauma" functions as a structure of feeling registering the disjunction between new social rhythms (platformized work, accelerated mobility, credentialized competition) and asynchronous interpersonal norms (filial hierarchy, pedagogical authoritarianism, workplace paternalism). Although users rely on Western theories to describe this misfit, their aim is not to become "modern" but to make sense of themselves, the world, and others through this very sense of disjunction, which is a process of temporalization rather than teleological progress. The delineation of "East Asian Traumatic Society" thus calls for rethinking postcolonial temporality beyond Eurocentric teleology.
**Keywords:** East Asian Traumatic Society, Xiaohongshu / Chinese social media, Digital ethnography, Confucianism and modernity, New Culture Movement, Teleology and temporalization, Postcolonial temporality

[738] Shirley Zhang (University of Manchester). *Dreaming Girls in China: neoliberalism in China/ ghost in China/ AI in China.*

**Abstract.** My research examines Dreaming Girls (mengnü), young women in China who form romantic attachments to virtual characters from anime, manga, and games. While this subculture originated in Japan, its growing popularity in China has been reshaped by local conditions. Traditionally, Dreaming Girls' relationships with fictional partners were one-sided, but the rise of AI chat applications—such as LoveyDovey, Character AI, SpicyChat, and ChatGPT—now enables the simulation of emotional reciprocity, transforming fantasy into interactive intimacy.
The phenomenon becomes especially meaningful when situated within contemporary China. First, the circulation of AI technologies is shaped by political and infrastructural constraints: many popular AI chat apps are developed outside China, requiring VPNs, workarounds, and negotiation with state policies toward data, platform control, and AI governance. Second, Dreaming Girls emerge within a shifting reproductive and gender landscape. China's historically family-centred, patriarchal model—emphasizing marriage, childbirth, and intergenerational obligation—is increasingly at odds with young people's priorities. Declining fertility, delayed marriage, and rising dissatisfaction with heterosexual relationships have led many young women to seek emotional safety, autonomy, and equality outside traditional romance. Finally, Dreaming Girls navigate China's officially materialist worldview alongside anime's spiritual and animistic sensibilities, resulting in a state of "disenchanted enchantment": they do not believe their virtual lovers are real, yet they act as if they are, revealing new forms of intimacy and belief in digital China.
**Keywords:** artificial intelligence, anime culture, intimacy, reproductive system

[741] Gennie Zhang (University of Cambridge) and Yusheng Bai (University of Bonn). *Worshipping the Divine as Ancestors in China.*

**Abstract.** This panel explores the persistent conceptual hybridity of the Deity-Ancestor Continuum in contemporary Chinese popular religion, examining how deified figures (shen) are transformed into kin-based progenitors (zu). We argue that the process of ancestralization—the mechanism by which spiritual beings are claimed as blood or ritual forebears—is actively negotiated and contested across three crucial social and geographical scales: the local community, the multi-provincial state, and the transnational platform. The four papers offer a comparative exploration of this dynamic:

1. Micro-Kinship and Gendered Ancestry: Gennie Zhang traces how women in rural Wenzhou actively form "ritual kinship" with the goddess Lady Linshui. Through practices of "mothering the goddess," women sustain vernacular moral and affective networks, demonstrating how non-patrilineal, female ancestry is creatively constituted at the community level.
2. Macro-Kinship and National Contention: Mengyuan Tian examines the politicized cult of the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi), the common progenitor of the nation. This paper analyzes the inter-provincial competition and cooperation among sites in Shaanxi, Henan, and Zhejiang, revealing how local actors leverage state institutional systems (ICH designation, A-level tourism) to define and contest national ancestry.
3. Transnational and Multi-Ethnic Kinship: Yusheng Bai investigates the revitalized veneration of Sage-King Shun in Hunan's Jiuyi Mountains. This study demonstrates how the common ancestor is utilized by local state actors to engage domestic visitors and unite the worldwide overseas Chinese diaspora (Shun Clans), while simultaneously navigating tensions with local ethnic minority groups.
4. Historical perspectives: Wenxi Chen explores the confusion, conflation, and reorganization of Nüwa and other mother goddesses in late imperial north China. This paper reveals networks of social interactions and relationships among goddesses and their temples and how these social networks had transformed the religious landscape of north China.
Collectively, this panel illuminates the fluidity of divinity and kinship, showing how the figure of the ancestor is constantly remade to fit various political, gendered, and global demands.
**Keywords:** Ancestor Worship, Ritual, Kinship, Goddesses, Memory, Intangible Cultural Heritage

**Gennie Zhang (University of Cambridge)** – *Goddess Mothering and Mothering Goddess: Recepting 'Ritual Kinship' in Contemporary Lady Linshui Worship in Wenzhou*
This paper traces how women in rural Wenzhou form and sustain ritual kinship with the local goddess Lady Linshui through rituals of vow-making and vow-repaying. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and oral histories of local devotees, it explores how ritual practice becomes a moral language of maternal care, where human and divine motherhood intersect in reciprocal relations of protection, remembrance, and moral cultivation. Through the narratives of women who dedicate their frail children to the goddess, seek bodily restoration after miscarriage, or entrust their fertility to divine intervention, the study reveals the ambivalent affective terrain in which divine reciprocity and moral surveillance of womanhood intertwine. In these ritualized performances of "mothering the goddess," women symbolically confer upon the goddess the role of their children's ritual godmother (gan niang), appealing for her maternal protection. Yet while the goddess assumes the moral burden of mothering, these village women also experience themselves as being mothered by her. Within this reciprocal dynamic, maternal subjectivity is continually reconstituted through ritual receptivity. This paper situates women's ritual experiences within a vernacular female knowledge system that moralizes womanhood through the local idiom zuorenjia ("making a household"). I propose that zuorenjia functions as an infrastructure of reproduction, a quiet infrastructure of care through which women sustain the moral, ritual, and affective networks of rural life. Through this lens, the ethnographic promises that Lady Linshui worship holds materialize ritual kinship as a generative framework for negotiating reproductive vulnerability and the customary patterns we thus observe in contemporary China.
**Yusheng Bai (University of Bonn)** – *Commemorating a Common Ancestor: Changing Worships of Emperor Shun in Jiuyi Mountains, Hunan*
This paper explores how the legendary sage-king Shun is worshipped as a common ancestor in his recorded burial place in contemporary China. Since the 1990s, the worship of Emperor Shun has been revitalized in Jiuyi Mountains in southern Hunan. Various actors, including local residents, domestic visitors and overseas Chinese communities contribute to commemorate the morally perfect figure. In varying scales, Shun is celebrated as a local tutelary deity, one of the founding fathers of the Chinese nation, and the common ancestor among the descendants associated with the worldwide Shun Clans (Shunyi). The current work traces the processes of claiming and legitimating Emperor Shun as a common ancestor, and the evolving worshipping rituals dedicated to him in Jiuyi Mountains and associated sites. The current worshipping practices, serving multiple functions, reveal both tensions and collaborations. While descendants of Shun are believed to constitute more than a hundred surname groups, ten major surname groups are emphasized. Cultural officials contend that the Yao ethnic group historically worshiped Shun and could be among his descendants, yet locally King Pan is celebrated as their common ancestor in the region's promotion of Panwang festivals. Local state actors also actively utilize the appeal of Shun to unite the overseas Chinese in their efforts of establishing ties with neighboring countries and regions. Based on archival sources, ethnographic fieldwork and heritage discourses, and examining the grand ceremonies and vernacular

kowtowing to Shun in this rarely researched locale, this study bridges the narratives and on-ground practices in the present veneration of Shun as a common ancestor.

[742] Di Cheng (Freiburg University) and Ruopu Zhang (Ghent University). *From Artifacts to Identity: The self-presentation and recognition of "China" in museums domestically and internationally.*

**Abstract.** This panel seeks to explore how museums, as representations of specific cultural spaces, influence audience perceptions of China's image through their collections, exhibitions, education programmes, and other related activities. At different times and places, through exhibitions and related activities, the museum tells different stories of Chinese history, presenting China's image to audiences from specific perspectives and providing opportunities for the audience to change their views of China. Bringing together scholars from diverse research institutions and fields, this panel examines the complex construction and reception of China's image by museums through individual presentations from different perspectives. The first two papers focus on how historical exhibitions interact with the politics and cognition of China of their respective periods from the perspectives of curators and audiences. The latter two papers examine how contemporary foreign museums display and present Chinese heritage and history. Through the exchange of historical, transnational, and cross-disciplinary topics across different fields of museum work, this panel first attempts to outline the similarities and differences in how China has been shaped, and further seeks to explore how museums, as places for preserving memory, can be founded on collective historical narratives of emotion and identity.

**Keywords:** Museum Studies, National identity, Exhibition Narrative, Museum Education

**Di Cheng (Freiburg University)** – *Reinterpretation of the History of Shanghai—The Construction of Revolutionary Museums and the City Culture of Shanghai in the Mao Era*

Since the late Qing Dynasty, the development of museums in China has been closely related to the pursuit of national modernisation and the reconstruction of the national image. The exhibits in museums are not merely a display of history; they also serve to rebuild the ideal national narrative and image. Based on archival and published sources, this study focuses on the construction of the Shanghai Museum of the Revolution during the Mao era. The research includes Shanghai's hesitant and exploratory policies in building the revolutionary museum, the re-curation of existing exhibitions during different political movements, and the work of different museums in Beijing during the same period. Through these studies, this research aims to examine the interaction between large-scale political movements and museum development during the Mao era, and to discuss how museums participated in the broad reconstruction of the city's image and culture during this period.

**Ruopu Zhang (Ghent University)** – *Shells, Dragons, and Silence: Curating the Paradox of Chinese Labour Corps Trench Art*

Abstract: This paper examines the museological challenge of classifying and interpreting non-combatant artifacts from the First World War, focusing on the trench art created by the Chinese Labour Corps (CLC) in France and Belgium. This unique genre is often marginalised in collections because it fails to conform to established classification forms, obscuring its profound significance. The CLC's trench art, distinctly non-Western and crafted from recycled European military debris, challenges the Eurocentric landscape of WWI memorials. We argue these artifacts materialize the CLC's profound alienation and deep nostalgia for home, inherently defying simple military or art historical categorization. CLC workers transformed spent shells into carriers of traditional Chinese motifs (e.g., symbolic flora, the endless knot, and script), making them records of psychological survival and cultural assertion. The exhibition of this material highlights a critical need for rigorous cross-cultural expertise. Misinterpretations—such as reducing complex Chinese symbolism to generic decoration—reveal common failures in interpretive strategy. The inclusion of CLC art challenges museum studies to re-evaluate classification and interpretive frameworks for transnational, marginalised narratives of global conflict.

[743] Elena Meyer-Clement (University of Copenhagen), Gil Hizi (University of Cologne), Lizhen Zhao (University of Massachusetts Amherst), Shuli Wang (Academia Sinica) and Chenfei Qian (Huzhou University). *Rural–Urban Encounters in Village Development.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines China's recent strategies of rural development that extend beyond agriculture, highlighting how service-sector initiatives — tourism, sports and recreation, gaming, and cultural heritage — reshape the countryside. Various projects in the countryside produce new encounters between rural and urban actors, as producers-consumers, performers-spectators, as well as collaborators in various entertainment and digital activities. These encounters take place in situ and through various media platforms, whereby villages draw on urban capital and consumer power while urban actors find value in rurality through desires for so-called

traditional, pristine, and ecological forms of living. Our panel foregrounds the specific ways these encounters unfold in China through local branding campaigns, shifting labor markets, and contested land politics. By tracing both the "urbanization" of rural space and the "ruralization" of urban processes, the panel offers a nuanced perspective on how rural China is not merely absorbed into urban logics but actively reshapes them, contributing to broader debates on development, spatial transformation, and the future of rurality.
**Keywords:** rural development, urbanization, tourism, heritage, sports, mobile games

**Shuli Wang (Academia Sinica)** – *Religion and Heritage Projects in Rural-Urban Development*
In the winter of 2009, Anng experienced its most severe blizzard in sixty years. At the same time, the residents of Huacun were forced to leave their homes to make way for the construction of the Anng National Archaeological Park, a move that triggered significant social unrest. Within a matter of months, the entire village appeared deserted, with only a few steadfast "nail households" stubbornly remaining among the ruins to resist demolition. This paper presents a spatial ethnographic study of Huacun's relocation, tracing its trajectory before and after Anng's inscription as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site. It further examines how heritage projects influence villages and how the production of local space is shaped by state politics, the global economy, and international heritage discourse. Through documenting the transformation of village space, this paper highlights the crucial role that cultural heritage projects play in the complex processes of urbanization and local development in contemporary China.
**Elena Meyer-Clement (University of Copenhagen) and Chenfei Qian (Huzhou University)** – *The Village as Corporate Playground: Leisure, Transiency, and Displacement in Zhejiang's Tourism Villages*
Over the past decade, tourism villages in Zhejiang province have undergone dramatic transformations. Guesthouses, resort hotels, art galleries, entertainment parks, and cycling lanes now occupy spaces that were once dominated by factories and agricultural enterprises. While these changes may be initiated by village actors or local governments, they invariably reshape rural political economies and social structures. External capital and corporate actors enter villages historically organized through collective institutions, creating "urbanized" spaces marked by corporate investment, new labor relations, and urban consumption. This paper examines how urban and rural spaces interact within these villages. Drawing on ethnographic research in Zhejiang's tourism villages, we show how state and corporate actors appropriate village land to reconstruct landscapes for capitalist accumulation, marginalizing local institutions and displacing villagers. Yet, this urban expansion into the rural is constrained by its inherent transiency. We argue that entrepreneurial ventures treat the countryside as a playground for investment and experimentation, but the sustainability of these commercial landscapes remains uncertain. Tourism trends driven by social media are fleeting, and external actors may withdraw as quickly as they arrive. Once village institutions are dismantled, however, the future of village life itself becomes precarious.
**Gil Hizi (University of Cologne)** – *Sporting encounters in rural development: "Village NBA" as a case study*
Taipan village in Qiandongnan Prefecture in Guizhou became the mecca of "village NBA" (cunBA) four years ago, organizing amateur basketball events in a large open-air stadium in front of thousands of spectators and millions of viewers online. In the subsequent years, new state managed projects of rural development through sports have been mushrooming in China, including football, running, volleyball, and motorcycle racing. Exploring the case of the cunBA, this paper asks what transnational modern sport contributes to Chinese rural development and how these projects configure the relationship between rural and urban China. The cunBA extends the priorities of tourism and heritage of the recent "rural revitalization" programs, while also shaping new dynamics and interdependencies between local and trans-local actors. In addition to producing and performing "authentic" rural ethnicity, the villagers act as spectators and consumers of the events, while also allowing visitors and media viewers enjoy their beloved sport in a new setting. Furthermore, the cunBA events, which extend from basketball to artistic and entertainment performances, celebrate the nation through various symbolic acts within the intersection of rural profit-driven visibility and urban nostalgia for pristine and uncorrupted lifestyles. Considering these constellations, this paper suggests viewing rural development through sport as a framework that adapts to the post-Covid limitations on social mobility, extends state control, as well as activates new forms of value extraction through tourism and digital media.
**Lizhen Zhao (University of Massachusetts Amherst)** – *Digital Orchards, Hidden Hands: Labor, Play, and Precarity in Baba Farm*
In Baba Farm, digital trees can grow real fruits. Launched by fintech giant Ant Group and e-commerce corporation Alibaba, this mobile game allows urban users, who long for the idyllic pastoral life, to completing daily farming game tasks and get real fruits delivered to their doorsteps in return. In addition, users can shop for agricultural

products through the application. Beyond a game-e-commerce hybrid system, Baba Farm positions itself as public welfare project which aids farmers by boosting agricultural sales. This aligns with state's push for technological and economical solutions for poverty alleviation, rural modernization and rural-urban inequalities. However, beneath the playful interface and "cause" marketing, Baba Farm reveals deeper tensions between urban entertainment and rural exploitation. In this paper, I examine how does Baba Farm gamify agricultural labor for urban leisure and what are the implications for rural communities?

Grounded in conventional ethnography at village supplying fruit (honeydew melons) to Baba Farm and digital ethnography of gameplay experience, I argue that, by engaging urban gamers in romanticized and de-contextualized "agricultural labor", Baba Farm exploits their immaterial labor while nudging them into deep engagement with Ant-Alibaba ecosystem. Meanwhile, despite some economic benefits to farmers, it renders invisible wide range of rural labor, exposes farmers to precarious market conditions, and significantly boosts platforms' power in agricultural market. Such technological solution obscures the need for profound political changes that are essential to resolving inequality issues and reproduces technological utopianism that assumes technological innovations alone could bring about a socially sustainable future.

[745] Helena Motoh (Science and Research Centre Koper), Federica Bosio (Independent Researcher), Lukas Nickel (University of Vienna) and Tina Berdajs (Slovene Ethnographic Museum). *Displaying China: Missionary Collections across Religious, Secular, and National Contexts (double panel).*

**Abstract.** The proposed panel explores the collection, exhibition, and interpretation of missionary collections of Chinese objects in Central Europe in the late 19th and early 20th century. It brings together case studies from missionaries from the territories of present-day Italy, Slovenia, and Austria. The first session investigates the collecting practices of Italian and Slovenian Franciscan missionaries in Hubei province. It juxtaposes two prominent collections emerging from this context, analyzing how their biographies were shaped by transnational collaboration, institutional affiliations, and shifting religious and geopolitical landscapes. The impact of the mobility of missionaries and objects is seen in this context as a key element in the shaping of the networks of acquisition, exchange, and interpretation. The second session focuses on the public presentations of missionary collections in secular and religious venues including museums, trade fairs, and missionary exhibitions. It explores how missionary collecting strategies were reconfigured to meet the expectations of diverse audiences, and how these displays navigated the boundaries between evangelization, ethnography, and cultural representation. Given the regional scope (Slovenia, Italy, Austria) and the broader historical backdrop of empire dissolution, border shifts, and nation-state formation, the panel also addresses the political and epistemological consequences of these changes for the study and curation of missionary collections. It reflects on how these can still affect scholarly and institutional approaches to missionary collections of Chinese objects today.

**Keywords:** missionary collections, Chinese collections, Late 19th and early 20th Century, Museums, Exhibitions, Trade and World Fairs, Transnational, Inter-national

**Federica Bosio (Independent Researcher)** – *Inter-national aspects of the Franciscan collections – the case of the Eastern Hubei mission*

Between the 19th and 20th centuries, missionaries increasingly extended their presence into the non-Western world, sending to Europe objects collected during their missions. These practices contributed to a rhizomatic and mobile geography: dispatched objects often followed multiple trajectories, circulating within the informal transnational networks of the Franciscan Order rather than only along national boundaries. At the same time, these movements had national and local repercussions, shaping convent-based museums, civic displays, and itinerant exhibitions in the missionaries' home regions. This paper examines these inter-national dimensions through the case of three Trentine Franciscan friars—Ruggero Covi, Raffaele Cazzanelli, and Ignazio Zanol—who were active in the Eastern Hubei mission and whose contributions later converged in the 1970s in the Franciscan Museum at the Madonna delle Grazie convent in Arco (TN). The paper illustrates their acquisition strategies, the purposes behind their expeditions, the kinds of artifacts they preferred, and the friars' different approaches to the materials they gathered, placing the case in dialogue with other Italian Franciscan experiences (for instance, collections from the Shanxi mission) to highlight convergences and divergences. Furthermore, the research reveals both localized modes of acquisition and moments of cross-border collaboration, most notably between Covi and the Slovenian missionary Peter B. Turk. Drawing on archival sources and material evidence, the paper treats missionary collections as an archipelago of interconnected yet heterogeneous experiences, allowing a transnational reading that shows how practices developed, connectivity operated, and these dynamics shaped the arrival, interpretation, and display of

Chinese objects.

**Helena Motoh (Science and Research Centre Koper)** – *Between the Sacred and the Secular: Strategies for Representing Chinese Religion in Missionary Texts and Collections in Early 20th-Century Slovenia*

This paper examines how missionaries from the territory of present-day Slovenia interpreted Chinese religions in the early 20th century through both their writings and the collections they assembled. The first part analyses missionary articles and related texts on Chinese religions, identifying common discursive patterns that developed over the period. It also highlights significant differences attributable to the missionaries' diverse religious orders—such as the Franciscans, Vincentians, Salesians, Franciscan female orders etc. — as well as the distinct contexts in which these texts were produced and in which the missionaries themselves encountered Chinese religious practices. The second part investigates the material dimension of these interpretations, focusing on the religious and secular collections created for institutions in Slovenia. It traces the strategies employed in the selection, acquisition, labelling, and classification of religious objects, and explores the ways these objects were displayed and interpreted. Special attention is given to permanent museum installations, temporary missionary exhibitions, missionary pavilions at the Ljubljana Trade Fair, and travelling fundraising or promotional displays. Finally, the study juxtaposes the textual and material strategies used to represent Chinese religion in early 20th-century Slovenia in order to assess the coherence and continuity of the missionaries' key interpretative frameworks, particularly those centred on concepts such as paganism, conversion, and ritual.

**Lukas Nickel (University of Vienna)** – *Missionaries in China collecting for the Vienna World's Fair*

The Vienna World's Fair of 1873 marked a turning point in the European perception of East Asian art. For the first time, both China and Japan were represented by large-scale exhibitions showcasing their industrial products, natural resources, national culture, and arts. The landmark displays caught widespread attention and initiated a surge in interest in East Asian art in Central Europe.

The Chinese show was largely the result of the efforts of the newly installed Austro-Hungarian minister in residence to China, Heinrich von Calice. He envisaged an exhibition that would present all parts of the empire, not simply the few port cities accessible to foreigners at the time. To achieve his aim, he sought the support of the only group of Westerners living in towns and villages outside the major Chinese metropolises and with extensive knowledge of everyday life in the empire: the Christian missionaries. In July 1872, he wrote to 18 Catholic and Protestant priests and asked them to ask Chinese Christians to participate in the preparation of the Chinese show in Vienna "in the cause of progress and civilisation" and to earn "sympathy from all who share an interest in their pious work". In most letters, he included specific suggestions for exhibits of significance for the locality.

Many Christians set out to collect objects of everyday use, local craft, and religious items. Missionaries from Inner Mongolia, for instance, sent costumes, cutlery, pots, a shotgun, arrows, wooden cups and two yurts, while the Hubei mission provided local tobacco, cotton, silk, and baste fibre samples as well as ordinary household utensils and jewellery. In the end, the displays of the missions filled about one-third of the Chinese pavilion.

The talk examines the contents and character of the missionaries' collections and investigates the impact the collecting activity had on the audience of the Vienna World's Fair.

**Tina Berdajs (Slovene Ethnographic Museum)** – *The Public Life of the (Peter Baptist) Turk's Missionary Collection*

This paper examines the missionary collection of Slovenian missionary Peter Baptist Turk (1874–1944), also known as the Turk Collection, which is today kept at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Turk acquired the objects for his collection during his missionary work in China in the early 20th century and sent them in several shipments between 1912 and 1913 to the Provincial Museum of Carniola – Rudolfinum (today's National Museum of Slovenia). In 1923 it was given over to the Slovene Ethnographic Museum as it became an independent institution. The present research focuses on the question of how the collection, or individual objects in it, was presented to the public outside the museums' permanent exhibition(s), which it was a part of. The analysis is based on archival sources, documentation, and various publications, which reveal various forms of presentation of the objects – from temporary exhibitions, accompanying educational programs to book publications. These varied examples gave a special platform to the presentation of specific objects and through it helped disseminating not only knowledge of the collection itself, but also of missionary activity abroad and cultural heritage of Asia, specifically China. This paper therefore aims for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of museum presentation and the significance of the collection in the context of public and cultural communication.

[751] Ondrej Skrabal (University of Hamburg), David Joseph Lebovitz (Hong Kong Polytechnic University), Maddalena Poli (Yale University), Boqun Zhou (University of Hong Kong) and Christian Schwermann (Ruhr-Universität Bochum). *Critical Concepts in Early Chinese Political Discourse: Evidence from Recently*

*Unearthed Manuscripts.*

**Abstract.** In recent decades, manuscript discoveries have reshaped our understanding of early Chinese political thought and practice, from textual production and transmission to manuscript use and dissemination. Manuscripts reveal an intellectual landscape far more fluid than the canonical tradition suggests, and shed new light on how concepts were formulated, contested, and repurposed across diverse communities. In this panel, we demonstrate how these new sources compel us to refine the concepts foundational to early Chinese political philosophy. After recovering du 度 ("commensurateness") as a critical yet marginalized virtue that shaped notions of leadership, the first paper asks how certain philosophical concepts became canonical while others were forgotten. Turning to the genre of commands (ming 命), the second paper analyses the Tsinghua manuscript *Then He Commanded 迺命, showing how Warring States thinkers adapted archaic templates to contemporary conceptual needs. Building on recent paleographic discoveries, the third paper traces the transformation of yu 喻 from the concrete sense of "river-crossing" to the abstract act of "carrying over" ideas, illuminating a Chinese concept of "analogy" and its points of convergence and divergence with "metaphor" as theorized by Aristotle. The fourth and final paper re-evaluates the concept of lü 律 ("statutes") based on its usage in early imperial manuscripts, exploring nuances of its normativity vis-à-vis its audiences. While we consider just a subset of the critical concepts circulating in early Chinese political discourse, these concepts represent the important ways in which unearthed manuscripts reveal new avenues to think of this discourse.

**Keywords:** political philosophy, conceptual history, Early China, bamboo manuscripts, philology

**David Joseph Lebovitz (Hong Kong Polytechnic University)** – *Du 度 as a Critical Concept in Lost and Marginalized Philosophical Discourses of the Warring States*

In most surveys of Warring States thought, a number of concepts or virtues, such as de 德 (moral power), zhi 智 (wisdom; knowledge), or ren 仁 (benevolence) are key to understanding the main philosophical debates. Schools tend to have their preferred virtues (e.g. ren in Ruist thought), but also their preferred interpretations of shared, contested virtues (such that what the Mozi calls ren does not much resemble ren in the Analects). In contrast to these concepts preferred by and debated within transmitted texts, this paper aims to illuminate the use of the previously unrecognized virtue of du 度, tentatively understood as "bearing," "rule," or "commensurateness," especially as it surfaces throughout a cache of Warring States manuscripts held by Tsinghua University. Drawing on technical literature, marginalized collections like the Yi Zhou shu 逸周書, and chapters of the Classic of Documents (Shang shu 尚書) that have not often been considered as philosophical texts, I show that in some communities, du 度 described an important quality of leadership, ideal personhood, and celestial/ritual alignment. I also question why some virtues became enshrined as key concepts and how others, like du, came to be obscured by received textual traditions.

**Boqun Zhou (University of Hong Kong)** – *Crossing Rivers, Crossing Minds: How yu 喻 Became "Metaphor" in Early China*

Although sinologists have long debated the existence of metaphor in ancient China, the word often regarded as the classical Chinese equivalent of "metaphor," yu 喻, has received relatively little scholarly attention. This paper offers a new account of the semantic development of yu, drawing on recent paleographic studies of the etymology of yu 俞. In oracle bone inscriptions, yu originally meant "traveling along a river in a boat" or "crossing a river." This core meaning later differentiated into words within the same phonetic series expressing physical and abstract forms of "carrying over": in the physical domain, yu 逾/踰 "to cross over" and shu 輸, "to transport"; in the abstract domain, yu 喻/諭 "to convey, to communicate." In Warring States texts, yu 喻/諭 is almost always glossed as gao 告 "to tell" or xiao 曉 "to understand" and only rarely as bi 比 "analogy, comparison," reflecting the communicative process at both sender and receiver ends. It gradually acquired the sense of "analogy" or "metaphor" because Warring States thinkers relied heavily on these devices or vehicles to convey their ideas. Building on this historical-semantic analysis, this presentation further compares yu with the Aristotelian notion of "metaphor," noting that both involve a form of "transfer," though of different kinds: with yu, an idea moves from one mind to another, whereas in metaphor, a word shifts from its ordinary to an extraordinary context.

**Christian Schwermann (Ruhr-Universität Bochum)** – *The Chinese Conception of Law Revisited: On the Usage of the Term lü 律 and the Functions of Documents so Designated in Early Chinese Manuscripts*

The classical Chinese legal term fa 法, which, depending on the context, is alternately translated as "law," "norm," "standard," or "legal category," and which is also said to refer to the entirety of applicable legal provisions, has received some attention in the past, including in studies of early Chinese manuscripts. In contrast, its counterpart

lü 律 has apparently not been considered problematic. There seems to be agreement that it means “statute” and refers to specific legal provisions that were assigned to the legal categories mentioned above.
In this paper, I examine the usage of the term lü and the functions of documents so designated in manuscripts from the early empire in the light of a claim by Léon Vandermeersch in his 1985 article “An Enquiry into the Chinese Conception of the Law”. Vandermeersch posited that law in early China was not based on the idea of right but was conceived as an instrument of government designed to enforce the will of the administration on its subjects. Were lü regulations for officials regarding the handling of items that were the subject of their administrative work, such as fields (tian 田) or robbers (dao 盜), and were the latter not conceptualized as legal subjects? Using methods from legal linguistics, I show how normativity was conveyed in lü, who the presumed addressees of lü were, and what “setting in life” (Sitz im Leben) they had in the early empire.

[755] Iwo Amelung (Goethe-University, Frankfurt am Main), Joachim Kurtz (University of Heidelberg), Joan Judge (York University) and Hugh Shapiro (University of Nevada, Reno). *“Sites of Knowledge” in Late Imperial and Republican China: A Promising New Approach.*

**Abstract.** “Knowledge does not exist by itself. It is always embedded in artifacts or embodied in individuals, communities, or institutions,” writes Christian Jacob. His influential concept of lieux de savoir—“sites of knowledge”—has opened innovative pathways across the humanities and social sciences. By foregrounding the concrete spaces in which knowledge is produced, transmitted, and validated, this approach invites us to rethink how different epistemic cultures take shape. Laboratories, classrooms, botanical gardens, as well as buddhist monasteries or muslim mosques are only some of the diverse environments in which observation, instruction, and experimentation unfold. While Jacob’s framework has gained remarkable traction in studies of the Mediterranean and Islamic worlds, its potential for understanding China and East Asia remains strikingly underexplored. Yet the late Imperial and Republican periods in China were characterized by profound transformations in institutions, practices, and communities of learning—precisely the kind of developments that the “sites of knowledge” approach is designed to illuminate.
This panel brings together four case studies that reveal the richness and diversity of knowledge-making in this era. By applying Jacob’s concept to Chinese contexts—including battlefields, bookstalls, observatories, schools, workshops, printing presses, and museums, we aim to highlight new connections, uncover overlooked dynamics, and demonstrate the analytical power of this framework. We contend that “sites of knowledge” offers sinologists and China historians a fresh, compelling, and indispensable tool for understanding the intellectual and institutional landscapes of the time.
**Keywords:** Sites of Knowledge, Late Imperial China, Republican China, History of Knowledge, Cultural History, History of Science

**Iwo Amelung (Goethe-University, Frankfurt am Main)** – *Sites of meteorological knowledge in Late Imperial and Republican China*

The development of meteorology and climate science in China started out during the late 19th century as a colonial enterprise and resulted during the Republican era and ever since in a scientific field, in which patriotic and even nationalist considerations played an continue to play an important role. The present paper wants to look into this development by looking into sites of meteorological practice. These include
1. “colonial sites” (or rather sites perceived as colonial) such as observatories in treaty ports and weather stations established by the Imperial Customs Service,
2. “exploratory sites” – this is non-permanent observations carried out by foreign explorers such as during the Sven Hedin expeditions etc.,
3. “national sites” – observatories and weather stations established and run by Chinese scientific institutions,
4. “international sites” - this is observatories and weather stations established in China within the framework of international scientific cooperation,
5. “experience sites” - this is weather knowledge generated mainly by farmers and crystallized in proverbs, ditties etc. 6. “recording sites” - this is weather observations as recorded in written material reaching from oracle bones, via official records to literary works and local gazetteers. This multitude of concrete and abstract sites provided Chinese scientists with a wide range of sources, which enabled them not only to establish a highly efficient meteorological service, but also allowed them to look into larger questions such as climate zones and climate change (or rather “temperature fluctuations” as it was perceived first) from a unique position.

**Joachim Kurtz (Heidelberg University)** – *Toward a Biography of a Site of Knowledge: Li Wenyu (1840–1911) in Xujiahui*

Is it possible to reconstruct the history of a site of knowledge by means of a biography? This paper pursues this question by tracing the life of the Chinese Christian Li Wenyu (1840–1911), who spent almost his entire, now largely forgotten, life in Xujiahui, the Jesuit compound in the southwest of Shanghai. Li was admitted to the Jesuit orphanage at Tushanwan at the age of nine and contributed to the rise of Xujiahui from a humble mission station to an estate some called the "Vatican of the Far East". In the course of his life, he passed through almost all the stations that distinguished Xujiahui as a multilayered site of knowledge: from schools, workshops and seminaries through the library, the publishing house, the printing press and the editorial office to the museum, the observatory, the weather station and the university. My essay will review the design and function of these interconnected sites through the lens of Li Wenyu's activities and try to assess the significance of Xujiahui as a site of knowledge in the context of late Qing China's intellectual marketplace.

**Joan Judge (York University)** – *BOOKSTALLS AS SITES OF KNOWLEDGE: VERNACULAR TECHNOLOGIES IN CHINA'S LONG REPUBLIC*

Bookstalls were sites for the circulation of vernacular knowledge in Republican China. Crude, often makeshift structures that dotted the metropolitan and provincial landscape, they could hold thousands of cheap print editions produced by small and middling "among the people" (minjian 民間) publishers. The stalls trafficked in technologies of the everyday: in medical formularies, collections of techniques, and household recipes. They proffered occupational know-how, from merchant manuals to horticultural treatises. They were, in the words of an educational expert who sought to reform them, "repositories of knowledge for the masses, the prime "reading site for the masses," and the principal "source of reading material" for the masses.

This presentation examines bookstalls as loci of vernacular knowledge cultures that were grounded in the epistemic virtues of experience and practicality. It excavates the dynamic assemblages of longstanding and newly imported knowledge, practices, and techniques which they circulated in "coarse and slipshod" material forms. It introduces the common readers who consumed these assemblages—sitting, standing, or on the fly—and traces the forms of sociability the humble stalls engendered. Finally, it places the specific type of bookstall that is the focus of this paper within a broader taxonomy. This includes classic old book bookstalls which serviced aspiring literati, illustrated serial book bookstalls which fuelled a knight errant imaginary, and foreign magazine bookstalls which brought images of an exotic elsewhere to the Chinese street side.

**Hugh Shapiro (University of Nevada)** – *The Battlefield as Epistemic Site: A Warlord Soldier Critiques Violence in 1930s China*

Born in 1906 in impoverished rural Shanxi, Mr. Li was a sometime school teacher, a sometime soldier.

After years of fighting in the internecine conflicts of the late 1920s and early 1930s, he grew disillusioned with its endemic violence and alienated from the anti-communist alignment of Shanxi Province. He viewed the escalating violence of the civil war between the GMD and CCP as both baffling and pointless. To investigate this conflict, in 1934 he left the classroom. He then reenlisted in Yan Xishan's Shanxi anti-communist army, with the intent of talking with fellow soldiers, to probe the ideas driving his country into military-political cataclysm. After mustering out, he travelled the country, begging for food to survive. He developed an anti-war manifesto. The wanderings of this soldier-teacher included a stint in a neuropsychiatric ward where, in detailed discussions with medical staff, he left a record of his ideas for the non-violent solution to China's conflicts. As a citizen ethnographer of his era's prolonged turmoil, Mr. Li aimed to create and disseminate ameliorative knowledge.

This paper explores his findings, which were conducted, by design, on the battlefield, and eventually chronicled in a self-contained clinical system. His chaste vision of a non-militarized future, fostered in an era of chronic warfare, was viewed by the clinical staff with ambivalence, between the naïve and delusional, yet also with a grudging recognition of Mr. Li's reasonableness, and flashes of prescience.

[757] Ka Ming Kevin Lam (Asian Civilisations Museum). *From Inferior Game to National Identity: the Rise of Xiangqi in Republican China.*

**Abstract.** Xiangqi (Chinese chess) has long been one of China's most widely played board games. Yet its cultural status was historically overshadowed by weiqi (also known as Go), which was not only older but also regarded as a more sophisticated and elegant pursuit. This established hierarchy – encapsulated in the saying yigui xiangjian ("weiqi noble, xiangqi inferior") – underwent a profound inversion during the Republican period (1912–1949). Amid growing concerns over China's cultural standing, particularly the loss of weiqi's preeminence to Japan, a cohort of xiangqi masters, most notably Xie Xiaxun (1888–1987), strategically transformed their game into a potent symbol

of authentic Chinese national identity. This study examines the cultural and social mechanisms behind this symbolic transformation. It analyzes how the xiangqi community mobilized patriotic discourse, reframed international views on Chinese chess, and utilized opportunities in the emerging public spheres to elevate the game's status. Drawing on diverse Republican-era sources – such as chess journals, endgame manuals, and documentation of large-scale public events like "human chess" – this study shows how xiangqi advocates constructed the game as a unifying national force, one that even resonated with Chinese diasporic communities in Southeast Asia. The study offers a fresh perspective on the formation of modern Chinese nationalism, revealing how a once-marginal board game was fashioned into a lasting symbol of national belonging that endured beyond the Republican period.
**Keywords:** Chinese Board Games, Cultural History, Sport and Politics, Republican China, Chinese Nationalism

[759] Hsien-Min Chu (postdoctoral fellow), Valérie Lavoix (Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales), Jörg Henning Hüsemann (Universität Leipzig) and Alexis Lycas (École pratique des hautes études). *Beyond Mountains and Rivers: New Perspectives on Landscape in Early Medieval China.*
**Abstract.** It is well known that the concept of shanshui, which is usually translated in English as "landscape," emerged in early medieval China almost a thousand years before it did in Western Europe. This panel does not seek to approach landscape from the strictly aesthetic viewpoints of poetry and painting. We rather wish to understand how early medieval actors thought of and represented the natural world and how they positioned themselves in it, by looking at landscape from different genres (religious accounts, geographical writings, agricultural treatises, rhapsodies-fu) and different scales: cities, rivers, cultivated fields and regions. The four presentations seek to challenge the conventional linear narrative of the emergence of landscape by focusing on the singular figures of Yang Xuanzhi, Guo Pu (along with several other poets), Jia Sixie, Yuan Shansong and Sheng Hongzhi. Most of these actors are well identified historiographically, their contribution to the concept of landscape is hitherto been overlooked.
**Keywords:** lanscape, early medieval China, genre, scale

**Hsien-Min Chu (Academia Sinica)** – *Paper Landscapes of Empire: Reimagining Capital Writing in Sixth-Century China*
Yang Xuanzhi's Luoyang qielan ji has long been read as a source for Buddhist history and personal memory, yet its distinctive contribution lies in reshaping the image of Luoyang—the capital of the Northern Wei—through the lens of Buddhist monasteries. This paper first examines how Yang incorporated temples into the long tradition of capital writing, replacing the palace-centered model with a cityscape defined by monastic landmarks. It then explores the cultural and literary dimensions of this urban vision, showing how temples functioned as both sites of historical rupture and emblems of the impossibility of remembrance. Finally, the paper situates Luoyang qielan ji within Luoyang's rivalry with Jiankang and the broader network of foreign embassies, arguing that Yang's narratives articulated a new cosmopolitan and competitive vision of empire. In conclusion, the work is not merely a catalogue of temples but a reimagining of the capital discourse—one that linked political legitimacy to global spatial imagination.
**Valérie Lavoix (INALCO)** – *Between topography and hyperbole: Selected views of rivers in fu poetry (2nd-5th centuries)*
One of the earliest definitions of the fu as a poetic form maintains that it "embodies the thing" (tiwu) to which it is devoted. It is therefore all too tempting to characterize Guo Pu's (276-324) "Jiang fu" (Fu on the Yangzi) – the uniquely preserved complete fu on a major waterway transmitted thanks to the Wenxuan (Selections of Refined Literature) – as an impetuous and torrential cascade of descriptive binomes and rare graphs, loci classici and hyperbolic analogies. Fragments of three later fu on the Yangzi, along with pieces devoted to other major or minor waterways (dating from the Later Han and Wei–Jin periods), survive primarily through their inclusion in two Early Tang encyclopedias. This corpus is, to be sure, disparate and highly constrained. Nevertheless, given the fu's distinctive agenda with respect to description and rhetoric, these texts provide toponymic and topographic accounts of river courses as well as representations of riverine and riparian sceneries, set amid stereotyped and recurrent imagery of waves, tempests and abysses, alongside conventional catalogues of flora and fauna. This paper assesses the extent to which such fu on rivers – whether complete or fragmentary – offer innovative representations of landscape in early medieval literature, in a manner comparable to the way the fu genre as a whole may be seen as foundational for poetry "singing of things" (yongwu).
**Jörg Henning Hüsemann (University of Leipzig)** – *The Cultivated Landscape - Agriculture and Environmental Knowledge in the Qimin Yaoshu*
Often praised as a blueprint for later agronomists, the sixth-century Qimin Yaoshu by Jia Sixie is regarded as one of

the most important agricultural treatises in Chinese history. While previous scholarship has largely focused on exploring Jia Sixie's practical instructions, this presentation will take a broader approach. Reading the text not only for its technical advice but also for its environmental imagination and conceptualization, it will show that Jia Sixie situated instructions for tilling, planting, and animal husbandry within a wider framework of environmental knowledge—articulating how land should be assessed, water and labor organized, and tillage aligned with seasonal rhythms. Through close reading, the presentation will argue that Jia Sixie envisioned agriculture as a form of landscape-making, in which the countryside should be turned into an idealized space in which humans and the environment interact harmoniously. By imposing order on the natural landscape, he created a "cultivated landscape" in which environmental observation, practical expertise, and social organization intersect. This perspective aims at illuminating how the Qimin Yaoshu framed agriculture not just as form of production but as an intentional, ordered transformation of land and society.

**Alexis Lycas (EPHE)** – *Fragmentary local writings and the birth of landscape*

During the 4th and 5th centuries, landscape emerged in and beyond the Yangzi basin. The birth and early developments of this cultural phenomenon are usually attributed to a well-defined 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 from the Eastern Han onwards have contributed to defining landscape. Produced by literati and officials such as Yuan Shansong († 401) and Sheng Hongzhi (5th century), stationed far from the Southern capital Jiankang, these writings have been hitherto neglected for material and epistemological reasons: they all are fragmentary and have only been transmitted through medieval geographical treatises and encyclopedia; such prose writings generally draw less scholarly attention than poetry or (texts on) paintings, despite their literary qualities. If pieced together and properly historicized, these local writings actually offer a wealth of information to understand the social and intellectual background that shaped the idea of landscape.

[760] Frederik Schmitz (University of Bonn). *"Fighting the Japanese": Participatory Propaganda and Emotional Legitimacy in China's War Reenactments.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines the phenomenon of participatory war reenactments in contemporary China, in which tourists actively engage in the performance of anti-Japanese resistance. Organized by local governments and tourism authorities, these immersive theatres pursue multiple objectives: provid-ing patriotic education, offering leisure experiences, and stimulating commercial activity. Drawing on ethnographic content analysis, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and the ex-amination of policy and media documents, the study investigates how state actors and commercial operators collaboratively create spaces that evoke patriotism as both embodied experience and commodified product.

Situated within China's broader transition from socialist collectivism to consumer-driven national-ism, these performances are interpreted as participatory propaganda, transforming ideological nar-ratives into shared emotional experiences. Through physical and vocal engagement—marching, shouting, and symbolically "fighting" for the nation—participants generate emotions of pride, an-ger, and sacrifice that authenticate and intensify official histories. These affective investments un-derpin what the paper conceptualizes as emotional legitimacy: the belief in the rightfulness of a po-litical elite based on emotional attachment.

Taking Shanghai as an example, anti-Japanese resistance-themed immersive theatres thus exemplify how propaganda adapts to the logics of the experience economy. Through the state's exercise of emotional governance, patriotic sentiment is produced, consumed, and validated within the realm of tourism. The analysis demonstrates that emotional legitimacy has become a central mechanism through which contemporary China reconciles propaganda, popular entertainment, and market-oriented cultural production.

**Keywords:** immersive theatre, anti-Japanese resistance, emotional legitimacy, performance, propaganda

[765] Lily Wu (Shenzhen University). *Digital Feminist Activism in China: Navigating Individual-Collective Dynamic Across Rural-Urban Divide.*

**Abstract.** In recent years, Chinese feminists have become increasingly active online, engaging in gender debates that remain largely invisible or unspeakable offline. While some researchers have focused on Chinese feminists as mostly urban middle-class women (Fong, 2002; Zheng, 2016; Yang, 2020), others have begun to question this assumption and call for greater attention to the diversity of online feminist activism (Dong, 2019). To investigate

intersectional feminist agendas and forms of digital feminist activism in China, I draw on 34 in-depth interviews with Chinese digital feminists—a newly emerging cohort of digital natives born under the One-Child Policy—who represent diverse rural-urban origins and socio-economic classes. Despite their significantly different experiences, almost all Chinese digital feminists in my study identified the gender stereotypes and patriarchal ideas inscribed in traditional culture as the common enemy. However, my research is beginning to show distinctions between digital feminists with advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds in terms of their understanding of feminism and their activism: digital feminists with advantaged backgrounds, especially urban middle-class women, tend to be more careful, reserved, and calculated about their participation/activism, and understand feminism as part of a narrative of individual self-development; while digital feminists from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially those from rural multiple-child families, tend to be more radical in their online advocacy, and discuss feminism and feminist activism for all women as a community or collective. My research therefore is beginning to reveal just how Chinese feminist digital activism is shaped by informants' natal families, socio-economic backgrounds, and related cultural capital.
**Keywords:** Chinese feminism, rural-urban divide, social media, feminist activism, intersectionality, collectivism, individualism

[767] Weishan Zhang (University of Oxford). *Writing Illness, Making Community: Mental Health Narratives and Female Digital Mutual Support in Chinese Fanfiction.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines how Chinese female fanfiction writers transform personal experiences of psychological distress into shared narratives and digital forms of mutual support. Drawing on long-term participant observation within online fanfiction communities (2019–2024), one million words of textual materials, 102 survey responses, and fifteen in-depth interviews, the study investigates how mental health is articulated, mediated, and collectively negotiated in a female-dominated creative space. The analysis shows that themes of depression, anxiety, dissociation, self-destructive desires, and pathological love are not merely literary tropes but function as narrative devices through which writers externalize internal turmoil and make it narratable. These narratives also enable participants to explore alternative models of intimacy, attachment, and dependency outside normative romantic structures. Within fanfiction platforms, such storytelling practices foster a digital affective infrastructure: an informal, low-threshold, and anonymous environment where women exchange emotional labor, validate each other's experiences, and cultivate forms of peer-to-peer care.

By tracing how "writing illness" becomes a means of "making community," the paper demonstrates that fanfiction operates as a space of collective coping in contemporary China. It argues that mental-health-related narratives perform a dual function: they provide expressive resources for individuals grappling with distress, and they sustain a mutually supportive culture that compensates for the lack of institutional or familial support. The study contributes to broader discussions on digital intimacy, affective labor, and the emerging emotional cultures of young Chinese women in online environments.
**Keywords:** contemporary Chinese popular culture, women's creative practice, Chinese fanfiction, mental health narratives, affective communities, digital mutual support

[768] Paola Iovene (University of Chicago), Danqi Lu (Hong Kong University), Ying Qian (Columbia University), Yuqian Yan (Zhejiang University), Chun Chun Ting (Independent Scholar), Antonio Yijiao Guo (King's College London) and Chang-min Yu (National University of Taipei). *Landscape, Region, and Migrancy in Chinese Cinema since the 1980s.*

**Abstract.** This double panel examines how Chinese-language cinema since the 1980s reconfigures the relationship between people and land during periods of dramatic social transformation. Rapid economic development, urban expansion, and shifting political mandates have fundamentally altered how individuals inhabit and navigate their environments. Our materialist approach moves beyond symbolic readings of landscape to consider how film engages with concrete spaces shaped by extraction, infrastructural overhaul, migration, and regulation. The panel highlights the entanglements between aesthetic innovation, political forces, and the spatial reorganization of everyday life in the post-socialist Sinosphere.

The first panel explores how filmmaking in Shaanbei, Xinjiang, and the Jiangnan region articulates new relations between humans, environment, and modernization. Two papers trace the rise of regionally grounded cinema and field-based visual ethnography that reimagined rural labor and frontier lifeworlds. The following contributions examine evolving screen imaginaries of Jiangnan, from the 1980s remobilization of literati traditions to support social and economic transition to contemporary filmmakers' emphasis on lived environments as sites of memory and ecological awareness. The second panel focuses on how cinematic spaces express displacement, precarity, and

transregional negotiation. Through analysis of the spectral landscape in Hong Kong's post-2019 "exiled cinema," diasporic interiors that reflect migrant women' fractured attachments, and space in recent Taiwanese films on migrant labor, the papers reveal how cinema presents lived conditions under shifting regimes of power and visibility. Together, the two panels show how Chinese cinema mobilizes material landscapes and migrant experiences to interrogate the tensions between groundedness and displacement that structure contemporary social life.

**Keywords:** Landscape, Cinema, Migration, Displacement, Visibility, Reform Era, Environment, Ecocriticism, Materialisms, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Jiangnan, Xinjiang, Hangzhou, Shaanxi

**Paola Iovene (University of Chicago)** – *Rural Imaginaries of China's Early Reform Era Film, or The Earth before Yellow Earth*

The mid-1980s were a turning point for Chinese cinema, both because of the split that occurred between national and international circulation and of the pressure on film studios to undertake structural reforms involving regional specialization and layoffs of personnel. While Yellow Earth (Chen Kaige, 1984) premiered at the Hong Kong Film Festival and was then screened at Locarno, Edinburgh, and Toronto, another film set in the arid landscape of northern Shaanxi, Life (Wu Tianming, 1984), generated debate within China for its representation of rural youth who no longer wanted to till the land, and showcased a new kind of "western" film (xibupian) that the Xi'an film studio was to specialize on under the leadership of Wu himself. This paper reconsiders these two films with the aim of better understanding how cinema reimagined rural China in the early reform era, and how it helped reconfigure the relation between humans and land against the backdrop of economic reforms that shook up the film industry itself.

The static landscape shots in Yellow Earth have been associated with classical Chinese painting and European neorealism, and have been related to Jin Guantao and Liu Qingfeng's assessment of China as an "ultrastable system." Whether focusing on its aesthetics or ideological implications, the earth in Yellow Earth has mostly been approached symbolically. This paper reconsiders the earth in Life more materially, by focusing on the environmental and economic factors that were transforming both rural labor in Northern Shaanxi and the work of making films.

**Danqi Lu (Hong Kong University)** – *Recasting Frontier Materialities: Hong Kong New Wave's Encounters with Northern Xinjiang in the 1980s*

The recent sensation of the Chinese mini-series To the Wonder (2024) has fueled screen-induced tourism and new cultural imaginaries of northern Xinjiang. For urban viewers, the region is now read onscreen as a poetic "distant land" promising healing and spiritual solace. This paper locates such responses within a longer materialist history of cinema about Xinjiang and its ethnic minorities, tracing how tangible substances, lived practices, and ecological relations constitute the onscreen frontier lifeworlds and become sites of sociocultural negotiation. It also charts how, in the post-revolutionary era, anthropological explorations of frontier civilizations became entangled with the commodification of frontier materialities, which are now presented as mass-media or tourism spectacles.

To unpack this transition, the paper scrutinizes the decade-long, field-based cinematography of Hong Kong New Wave director Peter Wai-Chuen Yung, who began filming in the then-closed Chinese borderlands in 1981. As an outsider to the region, he approaches the people, land, and culture with a reflective and experimental sensibility. Comparing Soul of the Wind (1982) with the re-edited Journey to Cossacks (1989), it shows how the latter forgoes romantic subplots between the archaeologist and the businesswoman, instead incorporating richer footage of local rituals and festivals to sustain the film as poignant materialist records of a vanishing lifeworld. Yung's two photography books about Xinjiang further complement this practice, adopting knowledge-based, ethnographic approaches to interrogate the ambivalences of "civilization" and "progress." Through raw, individual fragments, they archive indigenous land in ways that commercial or bureaucratic systems often overlook at specific historical moments.

**Ying Qian (Columbia University)** – *Cultural Techniques Across History: Gardens, Calligraphy, and Cinema in China's Early Reform Years*

With the end of the Cultural Revolution and policy shifts towards reform and opening, the early 1980s saw growing interest not only in the world beyond China but also in national cultural heritage. Historical artifacts, architecture, and traditional arts such as classical painting and calligraphy, entered new circulations as touring exhibitions traveled overseas while international tourists entered the country. Popular art history, such as Li Zehou's Path to Beauty (1979), fueled intellectual debates about personhood and historical continuity/rupture in social change.

This paper studies the remobilization of historical China in the early reform period by reading two films by the

woman filmmaker Yan Bili, Love, What is Your Surname (1980) and The Romance of a Calligrapher (1982). The former features Suzhou gardens as a space of memories, re-encounters, and healing. The latter is a historical romantic drama exploring calligraphy as a practice that cultivates individuality in relational terms. I situate these two films in the broader processes of reform and opening, from the revitalization of parks and gardens as spaces for re-socialization and consumption, to popular interests in calligraphy as a medium to redefine linguistic practices and personhood, and to state promotions of film exports and international tourism to reengage overseas Chinese and the rest of Asia. The aim is to understand how cultural techniques from China's longer traditions, particularly those from the literati traditions, were re-engaged to provide material, affective and intellectual resources for China's transition from the Maoist period to "capitalism with Chinese characteristics."

**Yuqian Yan (Zhejiang University)** – *Wandering Subjects and Material Landscapes: Hangzhou as Lived Space in Contemporary Films*

Since 2018, a group of emerging native Hangzhou directors has begun to foreground the city's distinctive urban and natural landscape in their cinematic articulation of memory, life, and dwelling condition. Often referred to as the "Hangzhou New Wave," these works abandon the postcard sceneries of the city, treating riverine topographies, mountainous landscape, and rapidly transforming city center and suburbs as formative conditions of life in Hangzhou. In doing so, they develop a regional aesthetic that blends documentary attentiveness to space with experimental narrative structures, grounding their characters in the texture of locations.

This paper examines how Hangzhou as lived space and material environment becomes integral to childhood memory, present experience, and ecological or historical consciousness in Qiu Sheng's Suburban Birds (2018) and Zhu Xin's Vanishing Days (2018) and A Song River (2024). Across these films, wandering figures function as mediators between spatial discontinuities and temporal gaps, moving through suburbs, riverbanks, and ruins that register the city's ongoing transformations. Childhood appears as a mode of heightened sensory openness, in which perception is porous and the boundaries between hallucination and reality dissolve. In contrast, the adults adopt a rational, investigative posture, surveying subsiding ground or measuring local geography. Yet their empirical efforts continually reveal what escapes quantification. Subjective temporality arises from the shifting material textures of Hangzhou, and personal histories unfold in active dialogue with the city's ecological and infrastructural transformations.

**Chun Chun Ting (Independent Scholar)** – *Spectral landscape and exiled cinema in post-2019 Hong Kong*

This paper examines the "exiled cinema" of Hong Kong and its projection of a spectral landscape of the city. By "exiled cinema," I refer to films about the city that, under the national security law, are banned from local screening. Since 2019, as Hong Kong has been pressured to shed many of its "undesirable" elements to facilitate the continued extraction of its financial and other capabilities, local filmmakers have turned toward taking stock of what is being shaved away, registering erasure, tracing political trauma, and documenting the ambiguity of the present. If Hong Kong cinema in its boom years of the 1980s and 1990s offered space for narrative films to employ the spectral as a critical lexicon, the "exiled cinema" today can only be made outside industrial and institutional support. Indie filmmaking – guerrilla shooting on location, reliance on film-school students and non-professionals, DIY post-production, and underground circulation – becomes the sole option. Other than independent production, exile here also implicates the migrancy of films and filmmakers, ideological commitment, and a state of mind. I consider how this condition of exile shapes the landscapes depicted in works such as Drifting Petals (2021) and Decameron (2021). As the camera is intent in capturing the absent and the suppressed, the landscape of Hong Kong emerges as inescapably spectral in these films. The spectral also manifests as overlapping historical memory and as a metonymy of places, as exile propels a comparative historical framework and stretches the notion of home.

**Antonio Yijiao Guo (King's College London)** – *Housing Chinese: Displacement as Settings in Stanley Kwan's Full Moon in New York*

This paper explores how the settings and spatial layouts in Stanley Kwan's Full Moon in New York (1989) articulate the layered experiences of displacement among three female immigrants from the PRC, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Drawing on Deleuze's theorization of milieux in time-images and the traditional Chinese literary device of analogous and categorical association (yin pi lian lei), I argue that material environment, such as furniture, decoration, and interior design, forge a (trans-)cinematic layer of historicized mise-en-scène that renders visible the sociopolitical and transcultural entanglements within the characters' daily life of displacement.

Through analysis of space-human interrelations, the paper demonstrates that various domestic and public spaces in the film are intertwined with the (re-)structuring of feelings among three females. Zhao Hong, a new immigrant from the PRC, questions the validity of assimilation in her Chinese American husband Thomas's modern apartment, expressing a nostalgia for her homeland that hints at an uncertain future. Lee Fung-jiau, a Hong Kong immigrant

well-versed in stocks and real estate, reflects Hong Kong's ambivalent position before the 1997 handover through her high mobility across different venues and her fluid, nonbinary sexualities. The Taiwanese stage actress Wang Hsiung-ping's constant failures in finding a stable accommodation symbolize the state of homelessness and/or belonging in absence. In tracing Hsiung-ping's intense encounter with her father, a KMT legislator in exile, inside a traditional-style study, the paper raises a broader question: how do interiors become transregional sites where migrant women negotiate the geopolitics of the late 1980s?

**Chang-min Yu (National University of Taipei)** – *Material Cooption and Taiwan's Cinema of Complicity*

Taiwan's ascension to developed economy is inseparable from its complicity in the glocal division of labor. While the local workforce has been mostly sucked into high-value manufacturing in the tech sector, migrant workers have been imported to address labor shortage in agriculture and long-term care. These workers often run away from their contracted employers because of docked pay, exorbitant fees, and systematic exploitation. Once undocumented and dislocated, their precarity turns into a flexible source of manpower that meets the small employers' need of contingent, seasonal grunts that the government arrests and deports in an opportunistic manner. Two recent Taiwanese films have elucidated and contested such entanglements and dislocations: Mongrel (2024) and Taman-taman (2024). The former follows the protagonist Oom—a Thai migrant himself—in feeding, wiping, and cleaning the disabled patients from day to day in the intimate confines framed by static shots. The audience's sympathy for him turns ironic once he is revealed as a facilitator of human trafficking. The latter hires Southeast Asian students and migrant workers to reenact their gatherings in the park outside of the Tainan train station. In these reenactments, the film conscripts the cinematic apparatus in turning the public space into a platform that is utopianly unexploitable. Mongrel peels open the profilmic space's political economy through its textured mise-en-scène of suffering, while Taman-taman coopts it as part of a cinematic event in broadcasting the voices of migrants. Both films understand complicity to be foundational to their practices.

[770] Yinzong Wei (Nanyang Technological University). *Identification of Woodblock Typefaces of the Earliest Imprints Excavated from Dunhuang and Other Central Asian Sites Based on Deep Learning Models.*

**Abstract.** Woodblock typefaces constitute the most immediate visual manifestation of the material medium of literature—namely, the book. In China, scholars have long treated typefaces as essential tools for authenticating and documenting editions of premodern Chinese books. Yet many fundamental questions remain insufficiently explored, foremost among them the origins of the earliest woodblock typefaces that appeared in imprints of the late Tang period. This gap mainly stems from methodological deficiency and a skewed academic focus of scholars, who have concentrated disproportionately on how woodblock typefaces imitated the calligraphic styles of a few renowned calligraphers while overlooking the influence of stele inscriptions and other forms of popular writing on the development of woodblock typefaces. This paper, employing deep learning models and other AI-based image-analysis techniques, conducts a detailed comparison between the shape/form of the typefaces of imprints excavated from Dunhuang and that of stele inscriptions from the Tang dynasty and preceding eras. The study demonstrates that the typefaces of the earliest imprints, most of which were religious flyers and posters, were significantly shaped by the stylistic features of stone and clay inscriptions. This conclusion also touches upon a broader issue in Chinese cultural history: the textual culture of the medieval period was not purely top-down, as popular cultures exerted a significant and non-negligible formative influence on elite culture.

**Keywords:** Woodblock Typeface, Manuscript Studies, Machine Learning, Dunhuang Manuscript

[771] Ka-Yi Ho (The Chinese University of Hong Kong). *Li Gonglin's Arhat Paintings in Later Memories.*

**Abstract.** Li Gonglin (ca. 1041–1106), a prominent collector, painter, and scholar-official of the late Northern Song dynasty (960–1279), is widely admired for his arhat paintings, especially during the Ming and Qing period (1368–1911). This study traces the original appearance of Li Gonglin's arhat paintings and examines the process by which they gradually became pictorial paradigms. As a representative figure of Chinese literati painting, Li Gonglin's works across various themes have long been scrutinized by scholars. However, in the absence of any extant works, the association between Li Gonglin and arhat paintings, especially in the baimiao (line-drawing) style, has not been systematically or thoroughly studied. This research not only clarifies that Monk Fanlong's Sixteen Arhats, now housed in the Freer Gallery of Art, derives from Li Gonglin's prototype, but also investigates two major types of Li's arhat painting oeuvre—the Arhats Crossing the Waters and the Sixteen Arhats—along with the historiography of Li Gonglin's arhat paintings. By reflecting on textual records of Li's arhat paintings, which appear only sporadically in literati writings slightly later than him but emerge in the Ming and Qing period as a prominent subject in both artistic creation and art-historical discourse, this study illuminates the factors and processes through which these

works came to be regarded as classics.
**Keywords:** Li Gonglin, arhat painting, the baimiao (line-drawing) style, canonization, historiography of Chinese painting

[773] Weixi Lin (Harvard University). *Erotic Monk Novel and Secular Monk Romance in Late Ming and Early Qing.*

**Abstract.** This study examines the emergence and development of monk-centered erotic and romance novels in late Ming and early Qing Jiangnan, particularly in Suzhou. Current scholarship pays limited attention to these works from a philological perspective: most studies either treat erotic novels as mirrors of monastic corruption or trace their literary prevalence, while often neglecting the Vinaya tradition and early monastic narratives. Drawing on works such as Sengni niehai 僧尼孽海, Langshi 浪史, and Nao huacong 鬧花叢, this paper demonstrates that erotic monk narratives often adapt, imitate, or patch together earlier gong'an fiction, historical records, and Buddhist miracle tales, amplifying sexual detail while reworking inherited moral or karmic frameworks. At the same time, writers such as Feng Menglong reshaped existing stories—particularly those of Honglian and Liucui—into didactic narratives of karmic retribution and repentance, thereby producing a parallel category of secular "monk romance" that differs structurally and ideologically from purely erotic literature. Through textual comparison, linguistic analysis, and the tracing of narrative pedigrees, this paper proposes a new classification that distinguishes "erotic monk fiction" from "secular monk romance," revealing their separate literary lineages and divergent cultural functions. Moreover, through close textual comparison, the study traces the two Sanyan 三言 stories of Honglian and Liucui back to early Vinaya literature and monastic biographies such as the Gaoseng zhuan 高僧傳, thereby demonstrating that traditional Buddhist narratives heavily influenced Feng Menglong's didactic adaptations.
**Keywords:** Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism, Erotic Novel, vinaya

[775] Guanyu Wang (The Chinese University of Hong Kong), Siyi Wu (University of Oxford) and Yu Shen (The Chinese University of Hong Kong). *Shaping World in Clay: Porcelain and the Global Dialogues of Early Modern Material Culture.*

**Abstract.** Jingdezhen, a small town in south-eastern China, emerged as the unrivalled centre of porcelain production from the Yuan dynasty onward, supplying imperial households, the domestic market, and global consumers. This panel examines how Jingdezhen's potters, workshops, and communities developed technologies, designs, and motifs that not only embodied imperial prestige but also responded to diverse cultural demands across Asia, Europe, and beyond.

Siyi Wu traces the history of monumental fishbowls, evolving from symbols of imperial patronage to highly sought-after objects in European courts, and reveals how local systems of knowledge, skills, and resources enabled potters to adapt to both domestic and overseas demands. Guanyu Wang investigates Kraak ware, a mass-produced export porcelain, and highlights the unexpected involvement of Ming imperial members in shaping designs that circulated from local palaces to global markets, underscoring the interaction between the imperial Ming and the wider world through porcelain. Yu Shen explores the transmission of tulip and carnation motifs across Ottoman Iznik ceramics, Dutch tiles, and Chinese Kraak ware, demonstrating how visual languages travelled and transformed across regions through the medium of ceramics.

Together, these papers illuminate porcelain as a vehicle of transcultural dialogue, where local expertise intersected with global networks of trade, diplomacy, and aesthetic exchange. By foregrounding cultural inclusivity, the panel situates Jingdezhen not merely as a site of production but as a dynamic hub of creativity that bridged traditions and fostered diversity in early modern material culture.
**Keywords:** Porcelain wares, Transcultural exchange, Global trade networks, Motif transmission, Cultural inclusivity

**Guanyu Wang (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)** – *Dragon and Kraak: The Interactions between the Imperial Ming and the World*

Towards the end of the 16th century, a newly designed blue and white porcelain was mass-produced in Jingdezhen and became increasingly popular on the global market. This new design was characterised by its panelled decoration and became commonly known as Kraak Ware. Its production is believed aimed at the overseas market, particularly the Europeans, who were a newly emerging and expanding market for Chinese porcelain at the time. This is also the main reason why, compared to the various sherds of kraak wares unearthed from the kiln sites of Jingdezhen, very rare examples have been discovered in other domestic sites in China.

However, this article argues that, although modest in scale, the sites of these kraak wares are showing close

association with the Ming imperial family, shedding new light on the role that the imperial family may have played in the design, production, and circulation of trade porcelain. Furthermore, a special design of kraak ware with an imperial dragon as the central motif stands out. Examples of this can be found in the palace site of the Jin prince in Shanxi province, China, with the mark Jinfu gongyong (Exclusively for the use of the Jin palace), in the collection of Topkapi Saray Museum in Istanbul, Turkey, in the V&A Museum in London, UK, and in the cargoes of the Wanli shipwreck that sailed for Malacca, etc. This article will discuss the design, production, and circulation of these wares, as well as the role that the Ming imperial members played behind the scenes, to further understand the interaction between the imperial Ming and the world in the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

**Siyi Wu (Oxford University)** – *Fishbowls for Every Court: Tracing Jingdezhen Potters' Knowledge and Skills in Local-Global Networks*

Jingdezhen has been globally renowned for its blue-and-white porcelain production since the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), including large-sized fishbowls decorated with dragon motifs. Initially challenging to produce, these impressive vessels were believed to represent the technological prowess of imperial patronage during the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1639–1912) dynasties. From the seventeenth century onward, these remarkable vessels also gained popularity among European aristocratic consumers, particularly those from Dutch and English royal courts, where they were used in gardens and as interior décor. Drawing on recent archaeological discoveries, ethnographic research, and scientific analysis, this paper traces the knowledge development and skill transmission processes in fishbowl production. While fishbowls symbolised potters' dedication to imperial patronage and their technological superiority in historical records, material evidence reveals that the technical expertise and material resources accounting for production success were not exclusive to the Imperial Workshop (Yuqi chang 御器廠) but were instead rooted in shared manufacturing traditions and production communities that had developed in Jingdezhen over hundreds of years. This local system of knowledge, skills, and resources enabled potters to make adaptive decisions in response to new demands from both domestic and overseas consumers and to overcome corresponding technological challenges, making a small town in south-eastern China the key supplier of global ceramic consumption.

**Yu Shen (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)** – *The Cross-Cultural Journey: Examining the Origins and Transmission of Tulip and Carnation Motif in Chinese Kraak Porcelain*

At the dawn of the seventeenth century, burgeoning maritime trade led to the extensive export of Chinese porcelain to the Netherlands. As one of the most important types of porcelain in the Sino-Dutch trade, Kraak porcelains feature a wide range of motifs and designs, including tulips and carnations, which began to appear as decorative elements from the 1630s onward. Previous scholarship has suggested that these two motifs may have originated in Iznik, a town in Anatolia in the Ottoman Empire known for a type of pottery named after it, Iznik ware. Tulips, along with carnations, had been widely employed as motifs on Iznik ware since the mid-sixteenth century. The combination of these two floral motifs later emerged in similar forms on Dutch tin-glazed tiles and on Chinese Kraak porcelains. This paper provides a historical context for examining and understanding the origins and transmission of tulip and carnation motifs on Chinese Kraak porcelains for the Dutch market. Based on regional and global histories of trade, as well as diplomatic interactions, the paper traces the possible routes through which these motifs traveled to Europe, particularly to the Netherlands, and the transformations they underwent when adapted within the Dutch visual and cultural context, foreshadowing their later application to Chinese Kraak porcelains produced for the Dutch market.

[777] Rui Ding (The University of British Columbia). *Liaodong Settlements before the Ming: Urban Sites and Agricultural Remains in the Liao-Jin-Yuan Periods.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines the relationship between military settlement in Liaodong during the Ming and the region's history before the Ming occupation. By highlighting the geographic landscape and historical livelihoods of the people who inhabited the Liaodong Peninsula before the massive Han-Chinese military-agrarian settlement migrants, this paper reveals the complexity of settlement distribution and agricultural patterns in Liaodong before the Ming military-agrarian settlement project began in 1371. The region was governed by non-Han regimes for centuries, including the Liao, Jin, and Mongol periods. The legacy of city construction over those centuries, both inhabited and abandoned sites, profoundly influenced settlement choices in the Ming Empire, in which a number of garrisons, primarily guard (wei)-level cities, were built on the ruins of Liao and Jin prefectural cities. The shrinking population of the Liaodong region in the Yuan period led to a decrease in township-level establishments, as reflected in the location of battalion (suo)-level settlements in the Ming military system, which were mainly newly established rather than the continuation of preexisting sites. In agriculture, too, Ming practice was built on earlier

precedents; through an examination of both textual and archaeological sources, it can also be seen that nomadic and semi-nomadic ethnic groups practiced sedentary agriculture before the Ming, primarily through intercropping. Since the conquest of the Parhae Kingdom by the Liao, the Liaodong region had become a significant cereal-producing region under both the Liao and the Jin, and this paper will also discuss the continuity between the non-Han agrarian pattern and Han-Chinese sedentary agriculture.
**Keywords:** Ming Dynasty, Liaodong Region, Settlement, Urban Sites, Agricultural Remains

[781] Jacopo Scarin (Ca' Foscari University of Venice). *"Calling Those Who Lost Their Way": Confucian Apologetical Discourse and Transformative Experiences in Late Imperial China.*
**Abstract.** Research on late imperial China seldom focuses on transformative experiences as a research topic in its own right, hence we lack a general understanding of conversion in traditional Chinese society beyond individual case studies. These are usually limited to biographies of Buddhist monks and Daoist priests, the most accessible examples of transformation in individual life trajectories, which are easier to analyse according to modern paradigms of religion and conversion. This article seeks to expand the current academic knowledge on early modern Chinese religiosity by focusing on a different kind of sources: Confucian apologetical texts.
Scholars are more accustomed to encountering instances of Confucian scholars deciding to dedicate their lives to Buddhist or Daoist self-cultivation. Consequently, phenomena such as intensification, integration of and re-affiliation or even affiliation to Confucianism have rarely been discussed, especially as part of a broader theoretical framework. Nonetheless, as is well known, Confucianism was long preoccupied with the spread of its cosmology among the population at least since the Song dynasty and during the Qing we find numerous texts trying to convince all sorts of people to undertake a process of transformation by interiorising the Confucian knowledge of the cosmos and practicing it in daily life. Using historical sources, such as Yan Yuan's 演員 Cunren bian 存人編 (1682), this article argues that it is possible to employ conversion as an epistemologically useful category for the study of late imperial society, provided that we adjust our understanding of the concept by transcending modern classifications.
**Keywords:** Late imperial China, Confucianism, Transformative experiences, Conversion, Religious Studies

[789] Xialing Liu (Chinese University of Hong Kong). *Reconstructing a Rare Screen: The "Painting-in-Painting" Coromandel Lacquer Screen at the Medeiros e Almeida Museum, Lisbon.*
**Abstract.** Kuancai lacquer screens, the so-called 'Coromandel', with their continuous unfolding leaves and monumental scale, create an imposing visual stage. Their circulation between East and West made them genuinely global and transcultural objects; today, most major national museums hold one or more examples. However, kuancai has attracted far less scholarly attention than porcelain and other works in the field of material culture, with few comprehensive studies tracing its history systematically. As a result, the academic significance of kuancai lacquer has been substantially underestimated.
This article draws on recent research and fieldwork to review kuancai lacquer screens, their terminology, technical origins, iconography, inscriptions, formats and dimensions, colour, chronology, conservation, and prospects for future research. Moreover, this study focuses on an exceptionally rare six-panel Coromandel lacquer screen—one of only two known examples of this form worldwide—currently housed in the Medeiros e Almeida Museum. The author has identified five additional missing panels that originally belonged to the same screen, thereby enabling a comprehensive reconstruction of the complete artwork. This screen features sixty "paintings-within-paintings" alongside numerous inscriptions, the stylistic sources and Chinese texts of which will be meticulously examined. Through this Coromandel lacquer piece, it is possible to trace a meaningful connection among late Ming printed illustrations, the Chinese ink spectrum, and lacquer screen artistry.
**Keywords:** Coromandel lacquer screen, Chinese lacquer, Fenben, Pattern Source

[795] Wen Melody Lu (College of Professional and Continuing Education, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University), Jing Bill Xu (Macao Polytechnic University) and Giorgio Francesco Arcodia (Ca' Foscari University of Venice). *The role of sound symbolism and of the logographic script in brand perception in the Chinese context: an experimental study.*
**Abstract.** The role of sound symbolism in creating successful brand and product names has attracted considerable attention from researchers in marketing (Klink 2000; see e.g. Spence 2012 for an overview). In the research on phonosymbolic associations in branding, it has been pointed out that what works for Western cultures, the focus of much research, may not always hold for other contexts (Motoki & Pathak 2022). In this talk, we present the results of three experimental studies on how different sound attributes of hypothetical names for vegetarian

restaurants, as well as graphic attributes of Chinese characters, are perceived by native (Mainland) speakers of Chinese. Participants (sample size 160-170 in each study) were presented made-up names for vegetarian restaurants, and we asked to rate them on a 1-7 Likert scale for 19 attributes related to vegetarian food (besides 28 other screening and atittudinal questions): the first two experiments used Pinyin, whereas the last one used made-up Chinese characters. Our results show that: 1. a name in the first tone is considered as more 'healthy' and 'harmonious' than one in the third or fourth tone; 2. a name with a fricative consonant (e.g. fīfī) is considered as more 'harmonious' than one with a stop consonant (e.g. gīgī); 3. A name using characters with less strokes and a symmetric structure is considered to be more 'healthy' and 'harmonious' than one using characters with more strokes (and all asymmetric characters). Moreover, these attributes correlate positively with the perception of a name as suitable for a vegetarian restaurant.

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**Keywords:** Sound symbolism, Chinese characters, Brand naming

[800] Ye Ma (Hong Kong Palace Museum). *Transcultural Patronage: Goryeo-China Literati Networks and the Formation of Korean Royal Art Collections.*

**Abstract.** This paper investigates the pivotal role of personal and diplomatic networks between Goryeo and Chinese literati in shaping Korean royal art collections and artistic practices. Focusing on the travels of Goryeo royals and official embassies, it argues that these exchanges facilitated a significant transfer of artistic models and tastes. The analysis highlights how Goryeo envoys were permitted to copy murals in Kaifeng's premier temples, while Goryeo artifacts, such as painted fans, were prized within the Song court. Central to this study are the deep friendships forged by figures like King Chungseon with Yuan literati, most notably the renowned scholar-artist Zhao Mengfu.
These connections directly channeled a significant body of Chinese painting into Korea. This corpus, which included works by masters from the Tang, Song, and Yuan periods, later formed the nucleus of the celebrated collection of Prince Anpyeong, meticulously recorded in the Hwagi (Record on Paintings). The paper further traces the stylistic influence of Chinese landscape painting, particularly the manner of Guo Xi, on Goryeo artists, as seen in later works like An Gyeon's Dream Journey to the Peach Blossom Land. It concludes that the landscape settings in Goryeo art often embodied a utopian ideal for scholar-officials, a concept transmitted and refined through these sustained literati networks.

**Keywords:** Chinese paintings, cultural exchange, Korean collection, literati gathering, Zhao Mengfu

[801] Kaydence Xiaoqi Sun (Lancaster University), Shuiqing Hu (University of Amsterdam), Taylor Yaxiang Liu-Cheng (The University of Sydney) and Gloria Yawei Duan (The Chinese University of Hong Kong). *Becoming Gendered Otherwise: Visibility, Governance, Desire and Everyday Practice of Female Masculinities in China.*

**Abstract.** Female masculinity has long been a generative topic in Western queer studies (Halberstam, 2012), yet its analytical potential has received little sustained attention in mainland China, where varied forms of gendered embodiment and self-presentation are visible, governed, and debated under the intersecting forces of heteronormative governance, neoliberal markets, and transnational shifts in defining gender and sexuality. This panel brings together four empirical studies to trace how female masculinities emerge, circulate, and are practiced in China. Our inquiry begins with female masculinity on screen and queer women culture. Paper 1 examines how female masculine figures are produced on screen through cultural negotiations that reflect Chinese mainstream understandings of gender, desire, and visibility. Paper 2 theorises Chinese female masculinity within a cross-national framework and its relations to Chinese queer feminism. Analysing debates over 'T' (Tomboy), it maps how legibility and legality are produced and how Chinese queer women govern others and selfs. Subsequent studies explore how female masculinity is situated and practiced across heteronormative and queer spaces. Paper 3 investigates workplace contexts where homophobia functions by rendering female masculinity simultaneously an exploitable trait in neoliberal labour and a punishable identity marginalised through socio-economic exclusion. Echoing this complexity, by examining labour of tomboy-identified workers in Chinese lesbian bars, Paper 4 illustrates how workers—often from less privileged backgrounds—perform commercialised intimacy while negotiating boundaries, precarity, and gender expression. Taken together, this panel approaches female

masculinity not as a monolithic category but as a dynamic terrain where aesthetics, regulation, and desire continually reshape recognition and visibility.
**Keywords:** Queer Studies, Queer China, Lesbian Studies, Female Masculinity

**Shuiqing Hu (University of Amsterdam)** – *Under the Censor's Gaze: Strategic Gender Encoding and Symbolic Subversion of Female Masculinity in Mainland Chinese Film and Television since 2000s*
This paper examines the complex representation of female masculinity and its strategic encoding of queer desire in Mainland Chinese film and television since the 2000s. Operating under stringent state censorship and pervasive heteronormativity, female masculinity functions as a crucial site of amalgamation of resistance and survival for non-heterosexual expressions. This study employs a critical media analysis, primarily utilizing discourse analysis and film semiotic analysis, to deconstruct the visual, narrative, and discursive strategies employed under constraint. This approach allows for the systematic analysis of the ideological underpinnings of female masculinity across the corpus. The analysis identifies three distinct representational modes: Cíxióng tóngtǐ, (Androgyny), a traditional mode that often indirectly reinforces patriarchal structures by validating female power only when channelled through masculine traits; Zhōngxìng (Neutral Sex/Gender), an ambiguous aesthetic of female masculinity (since the mid-2000s) that popularises the trait while its inherent queer political content is diluted and stripped away in the mainstream; and a novel, locally-derived concept challenging the limits of Zhōngxìng, Gōngqì is derived from BL culture. It denotes female dominance defined by inner aura and charisma rather than external appearance. This study argues that it strategically becomes the new obvious code for projecting female queer desires. Through the lens of symbolic subversion (Wieringa, 2012), this research offers crucial insights into how media negotiates political constraints, contributing a focused textual and visual analysis to the theoretical development of queer Chineseness.
**Taylor Yaxiang Liu-Cheng (University of Sydney)** – *Chinese Female Masculinity and Gender Trouble*
Rooted in the evolving discourse surrounding 'T' (tomboy), which refers to masculine-presenting lalas (Chinese queer women) and lesbian masculinities in Chinese lala culture, as both a lived identity and a contested category within Chinese queer feminist culture, this paper theorises Chinese female masculinity. Drawing from ten semi-structured interviews, textual analysis of online posts, and cross-cultural comparison, it examines how Chinese female masculinity becomes legible or illegible within networks of affect, governance, and recognition. The paper situates contemporary suspicion toward Nǚxìng yánggāngxìng (female masculinity) in relation to shifting feminist sensibilities since the Maoist and postsocialist eras, when state feminism valorised sameness while later neoliberal feminisms re-feminised agency as consumable self-management. Within this terrain, masculine-coded women trouble both patriarchal and feminist economies of visibility as they embody autonomy that displaces femininity rather than refines it, thus provoking a communal unease. Engaging with Halberstam's (1998) proposition that masculinity does not belong to men and extending it cross-culturally, the paper argues that hostility toward Chinese female masculinity arises less from masculinity itself than from masculinity stripped of male privilege and rendered queer. Chinese media's treatment of female masculinity further demonstrates how visibility functions as regulation, permitting stylised masculinity only when safely returned to Confucian femininity and marketable imagery. This paper concludes that theorising female masculinity in China demands an analytic that bridges the political and the affective, treating legibility and legality as intertwined processes through which gendered subjects are made, managed, and occasionally, allowed to exist.
**Kaydence Xiaoqi Sun (Lancaster University)** – *Usable Yet Never Legitimate: Tomboy Masculinity, Reticent Homophobia, and Gendered Labour in Urban Chinese Workplaces*
For many lesbian Ts in mainland China, negotiating their masculine gender expression becomes a persistent concern, particularly within workplace contexts. Drawing on interviews with forty T-identified participants and multi-sited digital ethnography in online lesbian communities, this paper analyses how tomboy gender expression is shaped, regulated, and negotiated in workplace contexts. It shows that while explicit discrimination against homosexuality is uncommon at workplace, the requirement to present 'appropriate' femininity, which shapes collaboration, career promotion, and professional legitimacy, silently compels tomboys to strategically feminise themselves. However, tomboy masculinity is simultaneously instrumentalised as a trait of work capacity, as they are praised as tough and reliable in ways that justify heavier workloads, longer hours, and greater endurance of pressure. By adopting the concept of reticence (Liu & Ding, 2005), a socio-affective mechanism embedded in the Chinese social context that enables homophobia to operate through indirect modes of governance, this research argues that homophobia in Chinese workplace was altered into a form of socio-economic marginalisation towards queers, as it reorganises labour and generates classed patterns of exclusion in urban workplaces, disciplining gender non-normative bodies through differential access to economic security and mobility. Under this framework,

homophobia was sophistically interlaced into the logics of capitalist exploitation, where tomboyness is tolerated when labour is needed and rendered punishable whenever exclusion is required. Tomboys who cannot sustain continual gender self-management are funnelled out of stable white-collar jobs into precarious forms of labour in which homophobia functions without ever naming itself.

**Gloria Yawei Duan (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)** – *Selling Masculinities: The Gender Performance and Intimate Labours of Bar T in Chinese Lesbian Bars*

'Bar Ts' refers to tomboy-identified lesbians working in urban lesbian bars. Often migrants from underdeveloped regions with limited education and job prospects, they engage in illegal compensated companionship involving drinking, flirtation, and occasionally sexual services. This research examines the lived experiences and labour practices of Bar Ts by employing a mixed-method approach combining six months of enactive ethnography as a Bar T with patchwork ethnography, supplemented by interviews with over twenty participants, including Bar Ts, Bar Ps (feminine-presenting workers), customers, and managers. Drawing primarily on masculinities studies and intimate labour framework (Boris & Parreñas, 2010), this study argues that Bar Ts' work consists of cross-spatial practices that mobilise masculinities through appearance, behaviour, and language to navigate desire, power, and intimacy, while they are frequently caught in significant emotional exploitation shaped by performance-driven labour, economic precarity, and intimate relationships cultivated wittingly or unwittingly. Specifically, confronting more privileged clients with increasingly fluid sexualities, Bar Ts strategically rework their masculinities and deploy affective tactics to secure economic benefits while balancing frontstage and backstage identities amid expanding boundaries of intimacy. In this process, the pursuit of authenticity within commercialized intimacy further blurs the line between their professional and personal selves, compelling Bar Ts to seek ways to survive and fulfill their own emotional needs under the imbalance between work and life. By centring Bar Ts' experiences, this study addresses a critical gap in scholarship on women-to-women sex services and rethinks intimacy, lesbian masculinities, and sexualities in contemporary China.

[802] Paula Teodorescu (University of Bucharest). *Sensing the More-than-Human: Embodied Cognition and Ecological Affordance in Can Xue's Barefoot Doctor.*

**Abstract.** This paper reads Can Xue's Barefoot Doctor 《赤脚医生》through the combined lenses of embodied cognition (Barsalou 2008) and affordance theory (Gibson 1979; Chemero 2003), as well as Can Xue's own literary philosophy (新实验文学), emphasizing the novel's posthumanist vision of perception, communication, and knowledge (Ferrando 2019). In Barefoot Doctor, cognition emerges not as a purely human, reflective capacity but as a bodily attunement to a more-than-human world (its textures, climates, rhythms, and instinctive cues). The narrative foregrounds a mode of perception grounded in somatic memory and heightened sensory responsiveness: characters orient themselves within their world through fatigue, touch, temperature, and instinctive bodily signals. Drawing on Barsalou, the paper argues that these cognitive processes unfold as modal simulations grounded in the body. At the same time, the novel's environment (plants, soil, winds, corridors, medicinal herbs) offers shifting affordances that guide action and open channels of communication beyond rational interpretation, without necessarily carrying metaphysical implications. Characters such as Auntie Yi demonstrate a cultivated ability to perceive the medicinal agency of plants, revealing a world in which nature is not passive backdrop but an active field of possibilities waiting for recognition as other characters learn to open their minds to these affordances. The paper argues that this intertwining of embodied simulation and ecological affordance produces a distinctively Can Xue epistemology, one in which cognition is distributed and inseparable from the material vitality of the world.

**Keywords:** embodied cognition, ecological affordance, posthumanism, somatic perception, more-than-human

[806] Aki Yin-Chang Chou (National Chengchi University), Teresa Irigoyen-Lopez (University of Oxford), Alberto Pozas (Autonomous University of Madrid) and Ng Sum Leung (University of Oxford). *Re-routing the Sinophone: Translation, Visibility, and the Making of Subjectivities Across Borders.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines how Sinophone identities, narratives, and cultural practices travel across intra-Asian and extra-regional circuits, unsettling dominant frameworks of difference and similarity. While Sinophone studies has often been structured around binary oppositions—alterity versus fraternity, distance versus proximity, empire versus colony—we propose a reframing that attends to the more complex negotiations that emerge when texts, bodies, and symbolic practices circulate across borders. It investigates how these travelling cultures generate new regimes of visibility, recognition, and belonging, reshaping the lived experience of Sinophone subjects beyond their physical and territorial origins.

Chou's paper examines Wu Ji-Wen's The Ecstasy of Galaxies through a "worlding transgender" lens, demonstrating

how translation recasts Taiwanese queer literature within transnational circuits of gender knowledge that link East Asia, North Africa, and Europe. Irigoyen-Lopez investigates second-generation European-Chinese artists, theorising a "regime of diasporic visibility" in which Chineseness becomes hyper-legible, commodified, and affectively demanding within European cultural economies, despite artists' attempt to decentre ethnicity. Poza analyses the reception of contemporary Taiwanese queer fiction in Spain, showing how Spanish literary markets produce a "fantasy of sameness" that resists orientalist consumption and instead cultivates modes of comparative proximity and shared queer futurity.

Together, these papers challenge binary readings of Sinophone cultural production by foregrounding the relational, contingent, and negotiated forms of subjectivity that emerge as Sinophone works and peoples move across linguistic, aesthetic, and geopolitical terrains. By centering circulation rather than fixed identity categories, the panel rethinks how meaning, difference, and belonging are continually reconfigured across travelling Sinophone worlds.

**Keywords:** Sinophone Mobility, Transnational Art Practices, Translation and Reception, Diasporic Visibility, Subjectivity and Identity

**Aki Yin-Chang Chou (National Chengchi University)** – *Rose Is the Past Tense of Rise: Worlding Transgender through Translation*

Wu Ji-Wen (b. 1955) is a key figure in Taiwan's queer literary history. His 1998 novel The Ecstasy of Galaxies includes the chapter "Rose Is the Past Tense of Rise," which was the first section in Taiwanese literary criticism explicitly identified as a transgender narrative. The novel's reception has varied: in Taiwan, it was initially read as a gay male narrative; however, the 2009 English translation framed it as the anthology's only piece addressing transgender issues. The narrative focuses on the relationship between Sumi, a gay man with AIDS, and his elderly transgender aunt, Seikei, who undergoes gender reassignment surgery in Morocco before working in Japan's sex industry.

Adopting a worlding transgender framework, this study examines how translation mediates the circulation of Taiwanese queer literature. The methodology combines textual comparison of the original novel and its English translation, paratextual analysis of the translator's introduction, and a political economy approach to the global literary market. The paper examines the novel's intertextual engagement with Sven Hedin's The Wandering Lake (1937), which Wu cites. This connection links Taiwanese queer fiction to early twentieth-century European exploration narratives, prompting a reconsideration of how global textual encounters shape the geography of transgender storytelling. This paper thus situates Wu's work within broader transnational flows of gender knowledge. Through Seikei's gender transition and journey from North Africa to East Asia, the analysis illuminates the complex politics of translatability, medical migration, sex work, and literary representation.

**Teresa Irigoyen-Lopez (Oxford University)** – *Chineseness Displayed: Affective Labour and the Hidden Injuries of Diasporic Visibility in Europe*

In the 1980s–1990s, large waves of migrants from southern Zhejiang settled across Europe, building restaurants, supermarkets, and wholesale networks that supported local economies while remaining socially invisible. For this first generation, Europe functioned less as a site of belonging than as a temporary space for wealth accumulation. Their relentless labour embodied the ethic of chiku, where hardship promised future mobility. But their European-raised children increasingly question this sacrificial logic. Rejecting such expectations, many turn to the arts as a means of self-exploration beyond the confines of diasporic communities. Yet Chineseness remains the most marketable aspect of their work, often overshadowing other forms of selfhood. Thus, second-generation artists find themselves caught in what I term a 'regime of diasporic visibility': even when they attempt to decentre ethnicity, Chineseness becomes their most monetisable identity, reinscribing the very ethnicisation they resist.

This paper traces these tensions in the works of Spanish-Chinese graphic-novelist Quan Zhou, Austrian-Chinese visual artist Jun Yang, and Italian-Chinese fashion designer PEPE, among others. It asks how visibility generates new psychic and social burdens. How do private injuries become publicly staged forms of suffering? When Chineseness becomes a performance within the attention economy, does visibility itself become a form of punishment?

Drawing on Boltanski's pragmatic sociology and sixteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in Europe and China—including interviews with second-generation art practitioners and literary, visual, and digital analysis—I argue that chiku has not vanished but shifted into gruelling affective labour, producing new forms of exhaustion and alienation for a generation negotiating belonging in Europe.

**Alberto Poza Poyatos (Autonomous University of Madrid)** – *Queer Taiwanese Literature in Spanish Translation*

This paper examines how the reception of contemporary Taiwanese Queer literature in Spain departs from the patterns of orientalist consumption often seen in other Western literary markets and in Sinophone literatures in

Spanish. Building upon the original concept of the "fantasy of sameness", it argues that the circulation of these texts in Spain produces a discourse of proximity, wherein Taiwanese queer narratives are not framed as exotic or radically "other", but as comparable. This outcome is the result of the recognition circuit governed by the intersecting coordinates of the Sinophone and the Queer, which in this context does not reify difference but rather favours proximity and sameness, enabling an imagination of shared optimistic futures.
The fact that this is the case for direct translations of Taiwanese fictional works into Spanish contradicts the traditional pattern of reception of Sinophone literatures in Spain. A pattern that has favoured an Eurocentric, orientalist circuit of recognition, turning many Sinophone works of fiction into mere anthropological objects for Area Studies and Chinese Studies departments. This paper shows how a peripheral literature has been circulated otherwise and offers a hopeful reflection for other non-Western literatures in translation.

[808] Yuting Chen (University of British Columbia), Andreea Chiriță (University of Bucharest), Emily Wilcox (William & Mary), Paolo Nordera (Stockholm University), Stefan Christ (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg) and Anna Stecher (Università di Napoli L'Orientale). *The Performing Arts as Translation: Negotiating Genres and Agents in China and Beyond.*

**Abstract.** Based on case studies from or related to China, this double panel investigates the performing arts as a dynamic medium of translation, proposing two distinct modes of inquiry: the translation of socio-political ideas and realities into the specific languages of performing arts genres, and the sociological analysis of the agents facilitating translations in intercultural contexts.
Panel I examines how abstract concepts are materialised into specific forms of performing arts. Yuting Chen explores how the 1930s media ecosystem translated ideas of urban modernity into the "mediated" stage language of huju opera. Andreea Chiriță analyses how Chinese and Romanian theatre makers translated anti-imperialism and Cold War diplomacy into the staging of classical plays, while Emily Wilcox investigates how Chinese audiences translated African dance tours into a vocabulary of anti-colonial solidarity. Furthermore, Paolo Nordera examines how the post-social(ist) condition translates the fragmentation of society into mutated forms of Realism.
Panel II shifts focus to the agents governing intercultural translation processes. Siyuan Liu examines the cultural negotiations required to stage the bilingual Salesman in China, while Stefan Christ highlights the "performative agency" of the surtitler based on recent productions in Germany and China. Finally, Anna Stecher addresses the question of how works by contemporary Chinese women playwrights can be translated, articulating not only the textual dimensions but also the broader cultural and political significance of these works.
Collectively, these papers demonstrate that translation in the performing arts is not a mere linguistic transfer, but a complex negotiation of artistic form and agency that actively reshapes intercultural realities.
**Keywords:** China, Performing Arts, Translation, Theatre History, Politics and Arts, Cross-cultural Communication, Modernity, Gender, Genre

**Yuting Chen (University of British Columbia)** – *Mediating Huju (Shanghai opera): Theatre, Media, and Modernity in 1930s-1940s Shanghai*

Huju (Shanghai opera) is a regional theatre performed in the Shanghainese dialect that emerged in the late nineteenth century and reached its golden era in 1930s-1940s with the flourishing of its iconic Western-suit-and-cheongsam plays. Rather than simply staging modern urban life through contemporary costumes, this subgenre was deeply intertwined with Shanghai's expanding media industries, including cinema, broadcasting, and the commercial press. Operating within this media-saturated environment, these plays not only circulated widely across media but were also aesthetically shaped by them—a dynamic I describe as "mediating." This paper examines the mediating process through three interrelated dimensions. The first concerns the subgenre's cinematic entanglements: so-called "cinematic tragedies," whose plots and stage design drew heavily from film, exemplified by Beican zhiye (A Tragic Night, 1940). Second, it explores the role of broadcasting, which became central to huju's popularity in the 1930s-40s. A striking case is the huju film Henhai nantian (Unfillable Sea of Regret, 1941), which was preceded by a tweleve-hour special program on Mingyuan Radio, generating significant audience anticipantion and box-office success. Third, it considers the subgenre's responsiveness to real-time news flows that tied huju closely to Shanghai's press culture. Ruan Lingyu zhisi (The Death of Ruan Lingyu, 1935), staged only one day after the famous actress's widey reported suicide across Shanghai's major newspapers. The three cases demonstrate how Western-suit-and-cheongsam plays were generated by Shanghai's media ecosystem. This dynamic reveals how a traditional theatre form was reshaped—and made modern—through its active participation in the city's intermedial cultural environment.

**Andreea Chiriță (University of Bucharest)** – *Staging Genre as Diplomacy: Classical Theatre Exchange between Romania and China in the Cold War*

To mark nine years of diplomatic relations, in September 1958 the Stalin Theatre in Brașov (Romania) staged Guo Moruo's famous historical drama Qu Yuan 屈原, produced and performed entirely by a Romanian creative team. Earlier that year, in May, and within the same programme of cultural exchange, the Wuhan Theatre staged A Lost Letter 失去的信, the renowned satirical comedy by Romanian playwright I. L. Caragiale, performed exclusively by Chinese actors.

This study examines the aesthetics of these two mirroring productions and the political narratives that ideologized such classical works, transforming them into instruments of cultural diplomacy. It argues that during the Cold War, the diplomatic practice of imitating the "cultural specificity" of socialist partners on stage served several clearly defined ideological purposes: demonstrating the superiority of Marxist values over Western individualistic capitalism; articulating an explicit anti-imperialist position; and cultivating a sense of communist brotherhood among socialist nations. The study further contends that these diplomatic policies, grounded in a model of cultural imitation of the other, redefined and reinvented classical theatre genres in former socialist countries by assigning them strong ideological symbolism and political intent.

**Emily Wilcox (William & Mary)** – *Dancing Sino-African Solidarities in the 1960s: Cross-Cultural Reception of African Dance in Early Socialist China*

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, efforts by the United States and its allies to suppress communist movements around the world created barriers for China's international relations. Beginning in the mid-1950s, the Chinese government employed cultural exchanges, including dance, as one way to facilitate relations with foreign countries beyond traditional diplomacy. In the early 1960s, the newly emerging independent nations of Africa were an increasingly important partner in these exchange activities, and it was in this context that the first ensembles of African dancers visited the People's Republic of China. The first three of these highly influential yet little known international dance tours were an Algerian art troupe in 1960, a Guinean national dance ensemble in 1964, and a song and dance ensemble from the Congo in 1964. This talk examines the reception of these African ensembles in China, with a focus on how dance mediated Chinese experiences of Africa and knowledge about African people, society, and culture during this crucial era of Sino-African relations. Scholarship in dance studies has often emphasized how perceptions of African dancing bodies reinforce colonial and racist stereotypes of Black people in European and US contexts. Here, I look at how Chinese representations of African dancing bodies differed from these patterns, instead identifying in them positive values such as anti-colonial aesthetics, revolutionary power, and artistic skill and sophistication. I also discuss how these positive valuations led some Chinese dancers to study and perform African dance as an expression of inter-cultural identification and political solidarity during this period.

**Paolo Nordera (Stockholm University)** – *Realisms After Socialism: Society, Theatre, and the Post-Social Condition in Shanghai*

Post-socialism – a term encompassing chronology, the coexistence of socialist discourse with neoliberal practices (Dirlik, 1989; Zhang, 2008), as well as a cultural logic that shapes perception, affect, and ordinary citizens' "everyday life" in the "transition from the guarantees and rigidity of socialist welfare to the fluctuations and freedom of mass consumer society" (Lu, 2007) – has become a productive analytical framework within scholarship on theatre-making. For instance, Ferrari (2023) demonstrates how stage productions from Shanghai and Beijing negotiate the reality(/ies) of post-socialism through "mediated, embodied and documentary realism" – modes of realism which she terms a "theatre of post-socialist realism". This paper argues that a persistent element in the varied panorama of 21st-century realist aesthetics is the ontological mutation of realism's fundamental referent, society (社会). Its representation, following Lukács, as a coherent "historical totality" becomes increasingly fraught amid the contemporary coexistence of consumer culture, popular culture, and postmodern culture (Ding, 2021) combined with the alienation produced by digitalisation and rapid urbanisation. Through an analysis of narratological and perceptual transformations of society in three spoken theatre (话剧) plays from the mainstream commercial scene of Shanghai – a metropolis that offers a paradigmatic and globally inflected example of the post-socialist condition – this paper formulates the concept of post-social realism, as a meaningful contribution to the study of contemporary realist forms. In other words, by examining the "social" behind the "(post-)socialist", this paper seeks to answer the question: how has the dramatic narration of society mutated in the current sociocultural landscape of Shanghai?

**Stefan Christ (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg)** – *The Surtitler's Performative Agency: Lessons from Hamburg and Wuzhen*

In the context of transnational theatre exchange, surtitles are often treated as a technical necessity rather than an artistic component. They are frequently relegated to the periphery of production logistics, handled by external operators with little connection to the artistic impulse of the performance. Drawing upon the sociological turn in translation studies, this paper challenges the invisibility of the surtitler, arguing instead for their recognition as an active agent with significant performative impact. The discussion is grounded in the author's practice-based research as the surtitler for two prominent Sino-German productions: Meng Jinghui's The Bedbug (Thalia Theater Hamburg, 2025) and Karin Beier's Anthropolis (Wuzhen Theatre Festival, 2025). The analysis of various problems encountered in these productions demonstrates that effective translation and projection requires active negotiation with a wide range of agents—from directors, dramaturges and actors to lighting technicians and prompters. This active engagement underscores that surtitling is a distinct activity, separating itself from traditional text-based Sinological translation and even from specialised theatre translation due to its performative, technological, and time-bound modalities. By highlighting how "glitches" in reception often stem from the structural isolation of the translator, the paper argues that the surtitler must be viewed as an active participant, thus demonstrating the necessity of their full and early integration into the artistic production and rehearsal process.

**Anna Stecher (Università di Napoli L'Orientale)** – *Translating "Women 我们": Women Dramatists from Contemporary China*

In recent years, women have become increasingly active and visible in many areas of Chinese theatre from which they were previously absent—or at least not very visible. This applies to theatre directors as much as to playwrights, publishers, etc., and it is reflected in the theatre spaces they inhabit. A striking example is the 2025 edition of the Wuzhen Theatre Festival, where an entire venue—the Granary—was designated as a space for women directors, playwrights, and other theatre-makers, accompanied by a dedicated programme with the title "Women 我们". How can these works be approached and understood? What can be done to translate them in a way that accounts not only for the words, the stories, and the texts themselves, but also for the broader situation, the contexts, and the places that these works have shaped? How can we translate their interconnections with social contexts and political agency? In this contribution, I focus on works by Tuo Lu (The Story of a Farm, 2018), Yan Xiaoping (The Nine Songs, 2020), and Zhu Hongxuan (Her Dynasty, 2025). Drawing on strategies from contemporary theatre translation theory alongside feminist translation practices—such as attention to place and context; collaboration with authors, theatre practitioners, or dramaturges in Europe; explicit explanation of interpretive decisions; amplification of implicitly expressed female or feminist elements; and the use of metacommentary—I aim to introduce several largely unknown works, reveal aspects that have thus far remained hidden, and highlight the broader significance of works by contemporary women playwrights beyond their texts.

[809] Georgijs Dunajevs (University of Würzburg). *Treasure every book: bibliophily and sociality in the postfaces of Yang Shiqi.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines the social world encoded in the postfaces (ba 跋) inscribed by the Jiangxi scholar-official Yang Shiqi 楊士奇 (1364–1444), a prominent grand secretary who served under four Ming emperors. Yang was an avid bibliophile who, by his own account, treasured every book he could acquire, regardless of its condition. His library is distinctive not only because he began building it as a poor and aspiring scholar – treating books primarily as instruments of learning rather than symbols of status – but also because he habitually added postfaces to most, if not all, of the volumes he owned. These inscriptions variously reflect on a book's contents, recount the circumstances of its acquisition, or commemorate the individuals from whom he obtained it. Taken together, they map a social network held together by shared enthusiasm for books. Drawing on the corpus of postfaces preserved in Yang's collective writings, the Dongli quanji 東里全集, this paper reconstructs Yang's efforts to assemble his library amid financial constraints and the scarcity of books in the early Ming period. It asks how Yang's collection was formed, who belonged to his circle of fellow booklovers, and what patterns emerge from his reflections on his holdings. More broadly, the study offers insights into the genre of the postface and into the dynamics of the early Ming book market.

**Keywords:** Yang Shiqi, book collectors, bibliophily, social networks, postface

[815] Josie-Marie Perkuhn (Trier University/ISPK Kiel), Felix Brender (LSE - London School of Economics), Marina Rudyak (Heidelberg University) and Reinhard Biedermann (Tamkang University, New Taipei City).

*Vulnerability, Legitimacy, and Symbolic Power: Taiwan, China, and the Contested Practices of Global Order.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines how actors with restricted recognition, limited agency, or structural vulnerability deploy symbolic, narrative, and non-traditional forms of power to shape international order under conditions of geopolitical contestation. Across four empirically grounded studies, the panel shows how Taiwan and China articulate competing forms of legitimacy and perform order-building practices beyond material capabilities.

The first paper analyses China's "Community of Shared Future for Mankind" as a strategic narrative of global order. Through the GDI, GSI, GCI, and the 2025 Global Governance Initiative, Beijing constructs alternative interpretations of norms and multilateralism aimed at shaping expectations across the Global South.

The second paper explores Taiwan's partnership with Somaliland as a departure from the ROC–PRC recognition struggle. It shows how Taiwan performs a post-ROC diplomatic identity and uses relations with de facto states to project democratic legitimacy in contrast to China's developmental-authoritarian model, positioning Africa as an ideological arena.

The third paper examines Taiwan's Arctic science diplomacy as a form of symbolic agency. Through scientific collaboration and alignment with democratic middle powers, Taiwan leverages technical expertise to gain visibility in Arctic governance despite formal exclusion, illustrating how constrained agency can generate normative influence.

The fourth paper investigates Taiwan's securitization of energy amid fears of blockade. Interviews and survey data reveal how threat perceptions link energy dependence to existential security concerns and intersect with Taiwan's green transition.

Together, the panel advances debates on norm contestation, small-state agency, securitization, and the symbolic politics of global order.

**Keywords:** Securitization, Diplomacy, Norm Contestation, Cross-Strait Relations

**Marina Rudyak (Heidelberg University)** – *The Chinese Dream for All? Interpreting the "Community of Shared Future for Mankind" as a Strategic Narrative of Global Order*

In the official narrative of the Chinese government, humanity "stands at a crossroads in history". The "so-called 'rules-based international order'" (所谓"基于规则的国际秩序"), shaped by the Pax Americana, is portrayed as unable to address the central challenges confronting humankind. The "Community of Shared Future for Mankind" (人类命运共同体) is promoted as an alternative vision of a more just, inclusive, and sovereignty-oriented world order – claimed to embody "true multilateralism" (真正的多边主义). The paper traces the "Community's" evolution from the first appearance of the slogan in 2012 to its position at the core of Chinese foreign policy in 2023, showing how it developed into a strategic narrative (Miskimmon et al. 2013) aimed at constructing shared, alternative interpretations of international politics and shaping the perceptions and behaviour of international actors. The Global Development Initiative (GDI), Global Security Initiative (GSI), and Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) – launched between 2021 and 2023 – form the official pillars (SCIO 2023) of this emerging vision of world order. Drawing on China's longstanding relationships with the Global South and its critique of existing multilateralism, these initiatives seek to legitimise China's order-building project: the GDI questions dominant development paradigms, the GCI relativises universal human rights, and the GSI challenges Western alliance logic. The paper shows how the "Community", as a strategic narrative, not only ideologically legitimises the Chinese governance model – reinforced by the Global Governance Initiative (GGI) announced in 2025 – but also serves as a practical instrument to challenge Western-dominated concepts of order and to establish alternative interpretations of norms.

**Felix Brender (LSE)** – *Performing Taiwan: Somaliland and the Reconfiguration of Diplomatic Identity in Africa*

Africa has become an increasingly important arena for Taiwan's international strategy, yet scholarship largely interprets Taipei's engagements on the continent through the traditional ROC–PRC recognition struggle. This paper argues that Taiwan's relationship with Somaliland represents a distinct and understudied shift: a form of post-ROC diplomacy in which Taiwan acts not as the "other China," but as a self-identified democratic state seeking partners beyond the constraints of Cold War-era sovereignty contests. Somaliland, as a de facto but unrecognized state, enables Taiwan to pursue foreign relations outside the zero-sum "One China" diplomatic battlefield. Rather than competing with the PRC over the right to represent China, Taiwan competes as Taiwan—a small, democratic, technologically capable political community. In this context, Africa emerges not only as a site of geopolitical rivalry with the PRC but as an ideological arena where models of governance, political legitimacy, and statehood are actively performed. The analysis draws on primary documents—including government communiqués, diplomatic correspondence, parliamentary debates, and public diplomacy material—supplemented by original semi-structured interviews with Taiwanese diplomats and Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials. The findings show how the

Taiwan–Somaliland partnership is mobilized to express a diplomatic identity rooted in democratic values, development cooperation, and digital governance, rather than in competing sovereignty claims. This case illustrates Taiwan's increasingly assertive identity-driven diplomacy and contributes to wider debates on unrecognized statecraft, small-state agency, and China–Africa relations, highlighting how Taiwan leverages African partnerships to craft a foreign policy that is both post-recognition and post-ROC.

**Reinhard Biedermann (Tamkang University)** – *Constrained Agency and Symbolic Power: Taiwan's Arctic Science Diplomacy Under Geopolitical Tension*

Taiwan's role in Arctic science diplomacy shows how a diplomatically limited actor can turn restricted agency into symbolic influence. Although excluded from formal Arctic governance, Taiwan has built a modest yet strategically significant presence through scientific collaboration, knowledge exchange, and selective partnerships with democratic middle powers. Based on interviews, institutional documents, and recent literature, this study traces developments from 2021 to 2025, including Taiwan's participation in German- and Polish-led research programs and its 2025 entry into the University of the Arctic. These small but cumulative efforts boost legitimacy through association, allow participation without formal recognition, and reflect Taiwan's broader shift from status-seeking diplomacy to technical and value-based engagement. Using a realist-constructivist perspective, the analysis interprets Taiwan's Arctic activities as expressions of limited agency and symbolic power amid U.S.–China rivalry and post-2022 disruptions in Arctic governance.

**Josie-Marie Perkuhn (Trier University/ISPK Kiel)** – *In Fear of a Blockade? Energy Securitization in Taiwan*

Taiwan's energy supply remains under significant strain. With a 97-to-3 import-to-domestic ratio, Taiwan is highly dependent on energy imports, leaving it vulnerable in the event of a blockade. This relationship links the topic of energy to security in a way that makes energy supply an existential matter. In a traditional sense, security centers around a military threat, the theory of securitization broadens this understanding to non-military interference. Aside a state as a unit, energy supply functions as such a threatened object. While geopolitical power shifts add to a tense global energy market, Taiwan's dependency on energy imports have become a matter of national security. Following this claim, this paper examines the securitization of energy and questions how Taiwanese people responds to the dual challenge of energy security while pursuing its a green transition. Under former President Tsai Ing-wen, the government forged a new model for sustainable development prioritizing green energy and launched the 12-Key Strategy Action Plan (十二項關鍵戰略行動計畫) as a comprehensive people's approach to achieving Net-Zero by 2050. Being interested in the public response and how they deal with the growing uncertainty, the analysis draws on interviews, first-hand impressions and an online survey on safety concerns conducted in collaboration with the National Taiwan University Websurvey Service (NTUWS) in August 20225. First results reveal that not only individual awareness and engagement contributes to a greener lifestyle but also that the threat perception of an energy blockade supports the securitization argument.

[818] Haoxuan Diao (Sapienza University of Rome), Orsolya Vincze (University of Pécs) and Mauro Sarrica (Sapienza University of Rome). *Cross-Strait Online Narratives of the Nanjing Massacre: Memory, Identity and Politics.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines memory politics in cross-Strait relations through online narratives of the Nanjing Massacre. Collective remembrance is treated as a political resource mobilised to consolidate identity, legitimise positions, and signal orientations toward Japan. A cross-platform dataset from Facebook, TikTok and Reddit (2019–2025) is analysed using comparative qualitative content analysis.

As a scoping step, all 73 Reddit threads on the topic (2019–2025) were thematically coded by title into five clusters: Existence Doubt, Political Framing, Comparison, Taiwanese Detachment, and Media, Education and Public Reaction. Posts were preliminarily distinguished into likely mainland-Chinese and Taiwanese groups using script, lexical cues, topical context and self-descriptions.

Clear differences emerge at the topic level. Posts likely authored by users in mainland China more often foreground patriotic education, institutional anchors and political framing, and more frequently employ comparative logics that relativise the event. Posts likely from users in Taiwan tend to use a more plural and quieter register and show stronger detachment from PRC-endorsed narratives. Comment-level findings for the same threads, with supplementary samples from Facebook and TikTok, will be presented, including code distributions and intercoder reliability checks on a subsample. Only public content is included and identifiers are removed.

Rather than inferring direct political effects, the study uses platform talk as a window onto everyday representations and boundary work. It specifies when narratives align with or complicate official scripts and when they open space for alternative frames and cross-cutting identification within relations among mainland China,

Taiwan and Japan.
**Keywords:** Collective Memory, Nanjing Massacre, Social Identity, Historical Trauma, Geopolitical

[821] Ting-Chih Wu (Academia Sinica). *Between Irrigation and Navigation: Hydraulic Infrastructure Maintenance in the Gaoyou Region along the Grand Canal, 1570–1855.*
**Abstract.** Between the late sixteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, the Huai River–Gaoyou Lake region of East China evolved into a densely engineered watery landscape shaped by repeated Yellow River southflows, rising lake levels, and persistent sedimentation. These environmental pressures intensified a structural tension between two competing hydrological objectives: sustaining adequate water levels for grain transport along the Grand Canal and ensuring timely drainage and irrigation for the surrounding agricultural hinterland. Drawing on local gazetteers, bridge and dike inscriptions, administrative memorials, hydraulic manuals, historical maps, and GIS-based spatial reconstruction, this paper argues that water-management debates in this region stemmed less from bureaucratic preferences or technological constraints than from the fundamental incompatibility between irrigation-oriented and navigation-oriented water regimes.
Case studies from Gaoyou demonstrate how bridges, dikes, weirs, and sluice gates operated as interdependent components of a flexible yet fragile hydraulic system requiring continual maintenance. Mid-nineteenth-century projects—including extensive dredging of the city moat and the construction of a new stone sluice gate funded by twenty-three local households, as well as repeated reconstructions of the Fu-gong Dike and Bridge in response to flooding and sedimentation—reveal a durable model of state–local cooperation. Officials typically initiated major hydraulic works, while local elites and community groups contributed financial resources and labor. This collaborative arrangement enabled the region to navigate conflicting water demands and to adapt to shifting hydro-environmental conditions.
By situating Gaoyou within the broader Huai Basin, the paper shows how hydraulic infrastructures materialized competing sociotechnical visions and how their maintenance mediated human–environment interactions in one of East China's most complex and contested water landscapes.
**Keywords:** Huai River Basin, Gaoyou, Grand Canal, hydraulic infrastructure, irrigation, water transport, environmental history, water governance, bridges and dikes, Ming and Qing China

[827] Simone Dossi (University of Milan). *Reforming China's Military. The Party and the People's Liberation Army in the 1950s.*
**Abstract.** In the 1950s the People's Liberation Army (PLA) underwent major changes. In 1956, the first official military doctrine was formulated, based on the experience gained by the PLA in the Korean War. Between 1954 and 1958, major reforms reshaped the PLA's command structure, introducing an organisational model that would remain largely unchanged for decades. The existing literature suggests that doctrinal change was initiated autonomously by the PLA leadership, with very limited involvement of the Party leadership and Mao himself. This has been equated to a "Leninist advantage" (Fravel, 2019), whereby the Chinese political system is able to produce military change without the political complexities of civil-military relations that characterize democracies. Yet, a closer look at the organizational reforms implemented in the 1950s offers a different picture. The Party – and its paramount leader in particular – played a crucial role in advancing (and shaping) organizational change in the PLA. The paper investigates the politics behind the military reforms of the 1950s, based on the several Chinese sources that are now available on this issue, including memoirs and biographies of military leaders, official Party and PLA histories, as well as key publications by Chinese military historians.
**Keywords:** People's Liberation Army, Military, Chinese Communist Party, Mao Zedong

[828] Chiara Lepri (Sapienza University of Rome), Natalia Riva (University of Milan), Federico Madaro (Politecnico di Torino and Tsinghua University), Gianluigi Negro (University of Siena), Giovanni Ruscica (University of Milan) and Tanina Zappone (University of Turin). *Visualizing China: Multicultural and Multimodal Representations.*
**Abstract.** As images increasingly mediate global understandings of nations and identities, visual and multimodal products (e.g. films, digital platforms, artistic performances, and transnational media collaborations) serve as privileged sites for negotiating cultural meanings and projecting symbolic narratives.
Focusing on the multicultural dimensions of representation, and building on the idea that "China" takes shape in visual, multimodal, and performative forms across cultural contexts, the panel investigates how Chinese cultural symbols are reframed through processes of visualization, mediation, and circulation, as well as how they are

received and interpreted by diverse audiences. Contributors examine the tropes, aesthetic strategies, and narrative patterns recurring across diverse media—from documentary storytelling and patriotic marketing campaigns to diasporic art practices and intercultural stage works—and consider how these forms respond to, reinforce, or complicate prevailing imaginaries of China in both their production and reception.

Bringing together scholars working with different theoretical and methodological approaches, the panel highlights the multiplicity of voices involved in shaping and circulating visual narratives about China. Particular attention is given to the interplay between official cultural initiatives, commercial and popular media, and independent or grassroots artistic expressions, and to the tensions that emerge when cultural symbols cross linguistic, national, and ideological boundaries, encountering distinct interpretive frameworks.

Rather than treating "China" as a stable visual construct, the panel reflects on how it is continually made and remade through multimodal practices and the acts of meaning-making, viewing, and interpreting accompanying them. In doing so, it highlights the interpretive possibilities—and contested terrain—that emerge when cultural symbols are mobilized within and beyond multicultural settings.

**Keywords:** Visual China, Multimodal, Identities, Narratives, Multicultural, Representations

**Chiara Lepri (Sapienza University of Rome)** – *Beyond the Myth. Youth, Lions and Social Imaginaries in I Am What I Am (2021)*

Chinese animated cinema has become one of the flagship products of the national film industry and is increasingly celebrated as "Chinese-style animation" (中国风动画). This aesthetic and industrial trend has gained visibility both domestically and internationally, with several titles reaching global streaming platforms and attracting transnational audiences. Many recent successes draw heavily on mythology and the fantastic. Monkey King: Hero Is Back (2015) revitalizes the figure of Sun Wukong, Big Fish & Begonia (2016) reimagines cosmological legends, and the White Snake series (2019, 2021, 2024) revisits classical folktales. In contrast, I Am What I Am (雄狮少年, dir. Sun Haipeng, 2021) departs from this dominant mode. Rather than turning to supernatural narratives, it tells the grounded story of Ah Juan, a rural youth who dreams of mastering the traditional lion dance while facing economic hardship and the pressures of growing up as a left-behind child.

This paper examines I Am What I Am to explore the forms of representation it advances regarding contemporary Chinese society. It focuses on three dimensions: the depiction of youth shaped by the left-behind experience and limited opportunities; the reframing of cultural elements, particularly the lion dance as a symbolic and narrative device; and the portrayal of the rural-urban divide as a central axis of social imagination. Through filmic and narrative analysis, the study argues that the film constructs a complex vision of cultural and social imaginaries, acknowledging their tensions while foregrounding lived realities and new forms of aspiration.

**Federico Madaro (Politecnico di Torino and Tsinghua University)** – *The Written City: The Beijing Streetscape as a Communicative Device*

This paper examines the contemporary Chinese street both as a site of circulation, commerce, and social encounter, and a communicative device producing, distributing, and regulating meaning in everyday urban life. In Beijing, the streetscape constitutes a dense semiotic environment in which inscriptions, banners, commercial signs, safety notices, political slogans, and digital screens form a layered linguistic landscape. These textual artifacts mediate interactions between state institutions, communities, and individuals, shaping how urban subjects perceive, navigate, and inhabit the city. Adopting a transdisciplinary approach combining urban anthropology, semiotics, planning theory, and linguistic landscape studies, the paper offers a typology of street inscriptions based on textual format, thematic content, graphic style, and spatial positioning. Particular attention is given to top-down communication, including municipal and national campaigns promoting social norms, public hygiene, digital governance, and civic virtue. These texts operate as tools of behavioral regulation and ideological narration, articulating an official vision of Chinese modernity blending traditional moral lexicons with contemporary discourses of progress, safety, and civility. The Beijing street emerges as a textual infrastructure where power is displayed, negotiated, and sometimes contested. Drawing on photographic material collected in Beijing between September 2024 and May 2025, the paper argues that urban space becomes a readable surface in which writing disciplines bodies, directs attention, anchors memory, and materializes ideology—making the street a crucial vantage point for understanding China's rapidly transforming urban condition.

**Gianluigi Negro (University of Siena)** – *A Historical Analysis of the Techno-nightlife in China: From Contamination to Domestication*

The study provides a historical analysis charting the evolution of techno-nightlife in China, examining its trajectory from contamination to domestication. Spanning from the late 1980s to the end of the 2010s, this research explores

the co-construction of the techno music scene. It utilizes a grounded theory approach, supported by sources such as the cultural review social network Douban (豆瓣), and the documentaries Minimal China. Techno im Reich der Mitte (2012) and China Electric shock (触电中国) (2019). The research has a triple aim. First, focusing partly on the micro-level—including individual tactics of resistance and creativity in the underground—while identifying relevant national macro-social structures. Second, the study views techno music gatherings as "assemblages of desire" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), recognizing the meanings these manifestations hold for participants, cultural operators, artists, DJs, investors, and policymakers. This perspective also partially challenges Thorton's definition of techno music as a "musical Esperanto," defined by its relationship to "concrete practices of production and consumption" (1995). Ultimately, the study suggests that as an imported cultural phenomenon initially linked to a Western imaginary of modern life based on the disco spirit of rebellion and revolution, techno music was gradually domesticated. Through this process, it became integrated into the symbolic projections of the organizing structures, fully engaged in the transnational capital flows.

**Natalia Riva (University of Milan)** – *China–Africa Cooperation on Screen: Narratives of Medical Aid in Welcome to Milele*

Marking the 60th anniversary of China's overseas medical missions and the 10th anniversary of the BRI, Welcome to Milele (欢迎来到麦乐村, 2023) is a 35-episode Chinese TV drama set in a fictional African village, developed with high-level State support and informed by extensive research and on-location fieldwork. The series dramatizes the mission of China's 25th medical aid team by intertwining lighter and more serious facets of cultural exchange, medical emergencies, and the protagonists' professional and personal growth. Each episode concludes with interviews with real aid workers, grounding the drama in lived experience and reinforcing its perceived authenticity and critical acclaim. After contextualizing Welcome to Milele within the genres of Chinese medical and foreign aid dramas, this study argues that it functions simultaneously as televised storytelling and media infrastructure. As televised storytelling, the show constructs an emotionally resonant, character-based narrative framing China's medical aid in Africa as human, transformative, and ideologically meaningful. As media infrastructure, it circulates these values through multilingual and multicultural production as well as dissemination strategies aligned with national goals. To reveal this dual function, the study draws on multimodal discourse analysis
adopting a combined approach: macro-level examination of the series' discourse content and structure and micro-level qualitative scrutiny of selected scenes. The aim is to identify the multimodal discursive practices through which Welcome to Milele communicates China's soft power and show how these audiovisual strategies portray medical aid as affectively layered and realistic while reinforcing narratives on China-Africa cooperation as enduring, reciprocal, future-oriented, and anchored in institutional continuity.

**Giovanni Ruscica (University of Milan)** – *Meta-Rewriting the Xiyou ji: Yao, Identity, and Intermediality in Langlang Shan Xiao Yaoguai*

The 2025 Chinese animated film Langlang Shan Xiao Yaoguai offers a sophisticated meta-rewriting of the Xiyou ji, itself a rewriting of the historical pilgrimage of Tripitaka. Rather than retelling the canonical story, the film constructs a meta-narrative that unfolds within the mythic framework of the Journey, transforming it into a reflection on imitation, identity, and cultural memory. Central to this process is the concept of yao 妖 — a culturally untranslatable term deliberately preserved in the subtitles — which anchors a meditation on liminality, belonging, and the everyday condition of the "ordinary monster." The analysis identifies three main displacements: (1) a shift of perspective from divine heroes to "small monsters" (小妖怪), creating a micro-history of the myth; (2) an identity crisis condensed in the line "We are not yao, we are scripture-seeking," where the denial of yao becomes a paradoxical path to self-recognition; and (3) an inverted Bildungsroman that concludes not in transcendence but in the acceptance of one's imperfect, animal self. Through a comparative reading of characters in the Xiyou ji and those in the animated film, this paper explores how Langlang Shan Xiao Yaoguai re-activates the classical narrative as a meta-myth for the present. While full overseas reception data are not yet available, the planned international release also raises questions about the cross-cultural mythologising of Chinese classics. Within this intertextual and intermedial dialogue, the film transforms the mythic journey into a medium for negotiating identity, authenticity, and cultural continuity in modern China.

**Tanina Zappone (University of Turin)** – *From Complaint to Consensus: Media Storytelling, Citizen Voices, and China's 12345 Hotline*

China's "12345" government service hotline has become one of the most visible symbols of the country's efforts to build more responsive, efficient, and data-driven public service mechanisms. Now operational in cities across the country, the hotline is commonly presented as a channel through which citizens can report everyday problems, express grievances, and receive timely responses from local authorities. While existing discussions often emphasize

the hotline's administrative and technological functions, this paper shifts the focus to its media representation. It examines how Chinese state-affiliated media narrate the "12345" hotline as a symbol of listening, care, and people-centered governance. The paper examines how citizens' complaints are turned, through media narratives, into stories of responsiveness, problem-solving, and renewed trust in the state. Focusing on recent Chinese media about the "12345" hotline, such as the BRTV mini-series Mahoney Observation: The Voice of Public Opinion on "12345" (2024) and the CGTN documentary Hotline Beijing: Pioneering Megacity, alongside state-media and academic reports, it uses qualitative discourse and storytelling analysis to explore narrative patterns, emotional framing, portrayals of citizens and officials, and the role of digital technologies. By examining the media storytelling around the "12345" hotline, the paper shows how public service communication contributes to the broader construction of technologically mediated legitimacy in contemporary China. The hotline is represented not merely as a logistical innovation, but as a symbolic infrastructure through which citizen satisfaction, administrative responsiveness, and state image are brought together.

[831] Jingxuan Xu (University of Edinburgh). *Guan (Care/Control): An Ethnographic Understanding of Care for People with Dementia in China.*

**Abstract.** This project explores the dynamic interplay between "care" and "control" in dementia care practices in China, examining how these seemingly opposing concepts are intertwined in caregiving. I investigated the forms and motivations of control within caregiving, analysing them through the culturally significant notion of "guan" (管), which connotes both governance and nurture. I examined how notions of "good" care shift fluidly depending on individual needs, values, and contexts.

Care and control are conceptualised as existing along a dynamic continuum, where caregivers navigate a flowing middle path to manage their actions and the daily lives of individuals with dementia, striving to achieve balance and "good" care. Drawing on the Chinese philosophical concept of the Middle Path (zhongdao, 中道), which emphasises maintaining balance amid dynamic changes, this study examines how caregiving practices embody this ideal and explores the alignment between good care and zhongdao as a guiding principle for life.

Based in China, the study situates these caregiving practices within the broader frameworks of Chinese family ethics, socio-economic transformations, and the evolving biomedical discourse on ageing. Drawing on participant observation and multi-sited ethnography, this research captures the lived experiences of family caregivers and professional care workers, public discourses on disciplining elderly individuals with dementia, and the interplay between local medical knowledge and caregiving practices. By examining the emergence, negotiation, and regulation of control within care, the study illuminates the intricate relational dynamics that caregiving produces and sustains within the context of Chinese philosophical and cultural traditions.

**Keywords:** Care, Ethics of Care, Anthropology of Ageing, Personhood, Dementia

[833] Wen-Huei Cheng (National Chengchi University), Hsuan-Chang Huang (National Chung Cheng University), Man Ling Loo (National Chengchi University) and Tsz-Him Chau (National Taiwan University). *Cross-Media and Visual Modernity: The Politics of Images in Modern Chinese Cultures.*

**Abstract.** This panel reconsiders how Chinese visual culture from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century shaped emerging modern subjectivities amid political transformation and media innovation. From the weakening of the late Qing imperial order to the rise of Republican Shanghai's urban visual culture to the reorganization of visual regimes during the Cold War, images intervened in history through their "mediality," positioned between material technologies, perceptual experience, and cultural or national narratives. Together, the four papers collectively ask how transmedia images configured the image and affective politics of nationhood, intimacy, freedom, and memory within the ruptures and continuities of Chinese modernity.

The first paper examines Dianshizhai Pictorial, showing how depictions of deformed bodies revealed late Qing intellectuals' deep anxieties regarding nation-building and modernity. The second paper turns to Liangyou Pictorial, arguing that photography reshaped the "modern" family and that "family love" emerged as a visible and imitable structure of intimacy shaped by scientific rationality, consumer culture, and semi-colonial modernity. The third paper examines the 1950s magazine Asia Pictorial, subsidized by The Asia Foundation, showing how Cultural Cold War propaganda mobilized star images and image-led layouts to translate "Free World" ideology into an everyday visual code of freedom circulating among Chinese-language readers in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. The final paper examines photographs in Pai Hsien-yung's fiction, showing how diasporic and marginalized subjects re-witness their lives through images, with photographs serving as crucial media for scripting identity and constructing personal, historical archives.

**Keywords:** Cross-Media, Visual Modernity, Image Politics, Marginal Subjects, Affective Politics

**Wen-Huei Cheng (National Chengchi University)** – *Transmediality, Modernity, and Visual Regimes: The Pictorial Narratives of Deformed Bodies in Dianshizhai Pictorial (《點石齋畫報》)*

This paper examines how the pictorial narratives of deformed bodies in Dianshizhai Pictorial (1884–1898) were incorporated into a global framework of visual culture and knowledge production through the retelling of global curiosities and local ethnographic reports, revealing complex relations among the body, power, and ethics. These narratives combine Western exploration and colonial activities with local ethnographic observation and folkloric accounts: from Arctic ethnographic fieldwork to an African land of tiny people, and from Burmese "hairy people" taken as spoils to the arrogant tailed inhabitants of Mount Emei in Sichuan, among others. Newspapers, photography, and museum displays jointly constructed the deformed body as a heterogeneous Other, forming an ongoing mechanism of transmedial visual governance that reinforced racial and cultural hierarchies, while the transnational circulation of these images expressed global visual politics and colonial modernity. While Dianshizhai Pictorial internalized Western imperial visual regimes, it also reframed foreign bodily spectacles through indigenous moral-ethical discourse, embedding reflexive spectatorship and critique. In the processes of translation, adaptation, and the cross-cultural commentary, these images reveal the construction of national subjectivity in late Qing China's modernization and the deep anxieties engendered by emergent modernity.

**Hsuan-Chang Huang (National Chung Cheng University)** – *The Archive of Marginality: Photo-Aesthetics in Pai Hsien-yung's Fiction*

Situating Pai Hsien-yung's fiction within the context of post-war Cold War displacement, this study investigates the photograph as a pivotal symbolic image and mediating vehicle. By re-examining the literary configuration of memory and time, it argues that photography in Pai's work transcends its static physical form. The photograph inherently harbors a paradox: it records the "that-has-been" while simultaneously signaling a traumatic rupture of "absence." Pai transforms this individual phenomenological experience into a literary structure of collective memory. Rather than mere nostalgia, the "gaze upon the photograph" operates as a narrative mechanism to reconstruct the displaced subject. Through this gaze, the absent "China" is summoned, allowing the lyrical subject to negotiate the historical void. The analysis delineates a progression of gazes across three key texts: in Taipei People, a "backward gaze" treats photographs as tangible relics of the lost glory of the "original home"; in New Yorkers, an "inward gaze" witnesses the alienation of expatriate life, highlighting the ironic contrast between the frozen past and a fractured reality; and in Crystal Boys, the medium is radically repurposed to script identities for homosexual and diasporic subjects. Here, photography transcends erotic spectacle, serving as a vital means to construct a historical archive for the marginalized "Dark Kingdom." These layered gazes coalesce into a unique "photo-aesthetics"—an imaged lyrical structure acting as an active intervention to re-anchor the self within the turbulent currents of diasporic history.

**Man Ling Loo (National Chengchi University)** – *Visualizing the Emotional Order: Liangyou Pictorial (《良友畫報》) and the Discursive Production of "Family Love" in Modern China*

This study examines Liangyou Pictorial from 1926 to 1936 as its primary text to explore how "family love" was reshaped within the contexts of urbanization and the popularization of photographic technologies in modern China. As one of the most representative magazines of Shanghai's modern urban culture, Liangyou not only showcased the daily life of the emerging middle class but, through the reproducibility of photographic images, also transformed family emotions into publicly visible, imitable, and consumable visual codes for the first time. This paper argues that romantic love, intimacy, and domestic warmth were commodified and hierarchized during this period, gradually forming a distinctly middle-class mode of "family love." In addition, Liangyou featured a wide array of scientific and hygienic child-rearing images. The poses of mothers, fathers, and children collectively constructed a mode of "modern intimacy," allowing family emotions to operate in tandem with modern knowledge systems. The continual introduction of Western home décor, wedding fashions, and couple imagery further reveals the semi-colonial mimetic structure underlying these family representations, rendering "family love" a modern lifestyle assembled through external visual indices. The ultimate aim of this study is to develop a conceptual framework for the study of "family love" in modern China. By analyzing how Liangyou Pictorial organized and visualized new emotional orders within the family, the paper contends that Chinese family love is far removed from natural emotions; rather, like romantic love, it is a form of "(colonial) modernity" shaped by discourse production, images, consumption, urbanization, and colonial anxiety.

**Tsz-Him Chau (National Taiwan University)** – *Visual Politics in the Cultural Cold War: Affective Mobilization in Asia Pictorial during the 1950s*

This study focuses on Asia Pictorial in the 1950s, a pictorial magazine subsidized by The Asia Foundation (TAF), as part of the U.S. state–private network. Through a cultural-politics lens, this paper examines how the magazine advanced Cultural Cold War propaganda by guiding readers' visual attention and sensory perception. Drawing on archival materials at the Hoover Institution, I first show that the magazine originated as the in-house film magazine of Asia Pictures, positioned as a counter to left-wing film pictorials.; when film production slowed, Asia Pictorial progressively reoriented itself and evolved into a composite pictorial combining film coverage, entertainment, and current affairs, with equal emphasis on three principal editorial axes: (1) film-industry news; (2) female stars, "modern girls," and bodily display; and (3) international-affairs photo-features. By reconstructing issue-level selection and layout, I demonstrate how these strands translated abstract political ideology into readers' felt habits of seeing, imaginaries of taste, and sensory experience. Furthermore, I conceptualize this operation as affective mobilization. Specifically, through image-led layout, sensationalist reporting, and photo-essays, Asia Pictorial manufactured a visual ordinariness of "Free World" values—rendering them available and easily to be experienced and emulated. Finally, by situating the magazine's circulation across Hong Kong- Taiwan-Southeast Asia, the paper shows how this pictorial infrastructure outlined a shared affective pathway of "Cold War visual modernity" among Chinese-language readers in the early Cold War.

[836] Matteo Sgorbati (Academia Sinica). *A Modern Geyi: Dharma Lists, Psychology, and the Making of Chinese Philosophy.*

**Abstract.** Drawing on sources from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this paper reexamines the rise of a modern discourse on "matching concepts" (geyi 格義) as a distinctively 'Chinese' form of comparative philosophy. Methodologically, two uses of geyi can be distinguished. On the one hand, geyi historically referred to pedagogical practices that "took the numerical categories of the sūtras and matched them with non-Buddhist texts, using them as examples to instruct novices" (以經中事數，擬配外書，為生解之例, Zhu Faya 竺法雅, Jin dynasty). On the other hand, the term was later broadened to denote a more general philosophical approach that "takes the principles and concepts of one's own country and matches them with a thought coming from abroad" (以本國之義理，擬配外來思想, Tang Yongtong 湯用彤, 1962). When confronted with modern sciences, lay Buddhists and monastics applied these schemes to new areas. Specifically, they paired traditional dharma lists with newly introduced concepts from scientific psychology. The paper argues that this renewed interest in comparing conceptual lists underpinned the modern reinterpretation and popularization of geyi as a main category in the history of Chinese thought.

**Keywords:** geyi, psychology, modern Buddhism, Chinese philosophy, comparative philosophy

[841] Bruce Xin Tao (University of Sydney). *Loyalists, Nationals, Cosmopolitans: Political Identity Types Among Young Chinese Migrants.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines how young Chinese migrants renegotiate national identity and political belonging after relocating from the People's Republic of China to Australia. Drawing on more than forty in-depth interviews with highly educated migrants who grew up during China's Patriotic Education Campaign, the study explores how early patriotic socialisation interacts with post-migration experiences to produce divergent identity trajectories within transnational social fields.

The paper argues that patriotic education generates enduring cognitive and affective dispositions that accompany individuals across borders, shaping how they interpret political legitimacy, national history, and China–Australia relations. Yet migration exposes them to competing institutional norms, democratic values, and everyday encounters that can unsettle, reinforce, or transform these inherited frameworks.

Through thematic and process-oriented analysis, the study identifies three recurring political identity orientations—authoritarian loyalists, liberal nationals, and liberal cosmopolitans. These types capture distinct ways of reconciling emotional attachment to China with lived experiences in Australia, including how migrants understand citizenship, political trust, national pride, and the meaning of being "Chinese abroad." The findings show that homeland-oriented identities do not simply dissipate after migration; instead, they are selectively reconfigured through transnational information flows, shifting emotional ties, and the practical conditions of life in a liberal democratic society.

By bridging political socialisation scholarship with diaspora and identity-formation studies, the paper demonstrates how patriotic conditioning continues to shape migrants' identity trajectories in subtle yet powerful ways. It contributes to broader debates on Chinese diasporic politics, nationalism beyond the nation-state, and the complex negotiations of belonging among new Chinese migrants in global contexts.

**Keywords:** Chinese migrants, patriotic socialisation, political identity, nationalism, diaspora, transnational belonging, identity formation

[845] Julia C. Schneider (Universität Hamburg), Lilith W. Lee (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), Philippe Major (Lancaster University) and Joseph Ciaudo (Université d'Orléans). *The Contemporaneity of the Non-Contemporaneous: On the Politics of the Past in the Modern Sinophone World.*

**Abstract.** In The Notion of Authority, Alexandre Kojève famously argued that the past retains authority in the present only insofar as it is believed to have caused it. Modernity, by severing this causal link, "amputated" the authority of the past. The papers in this panel collectively challenge this claim. Each paper demonstrates, in its own way, how past forms of thought, institutional logics, and discursive structures persist within, shape, or are strategically reactivated in modern and contemporary contexts, creating layered temporalities that resist linear narratives of rupture or modernization. Adopting intellectual-historical approaches, they show that the past continues to wield significant authority in the modern Sinophone world. Yet this authority is not secured through a simple continuity of causation. Rather, it emerges because disparate, even antiquated, temporal strata remain contemporaneous within modern discourses—a phenomenon Koselleck once identified at the heart of modern historical experience itself. The panelists reflect on the politics of the past and this contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous in the modern Sinophone world through various lenses. Julia C. Schneider inquires into the complex politics of historians working on the Qianlong emperor's censorship project under conditions of censorship. Lilith W. Lee probes into the hybridity of the past Lim Boon Keng appeals to—in the liminal space of British Malaya—in his rethinking of Confucianism along the lines of evolutionary science and Scottish medicine. Philippe Major argues that modern Confucians drew discursive resources from imperial polity to create a homology between the centrality of their positionality in the field of Confucian/Chinese studies and that of the emperor in the empire. Finally, Joseph Ciaudo looks at contemporary Chinese historians challenging the authority of the West's past with the aim of establishing the authority of theirs—while simultaneously drawing parallels between their politics of the past and that of Chinese historians engaging in the discourse of "Sino-Babylonianism" in the early twentieth century. Taken together, these papers demonstrate that within Chinese intellectual history diverse temporalities coexist and interact. In revealing how the non-contemporaneous persists within and structures the 2 modern, the panel exemplifies Koselleck's insight that modern historical experience is fundamentally defined by the coexistence and contestation of asynchronous times.

**Keywords:** Contemporaneity, Politics of the Past, Modern Sinophone World, Modern Chinese intellectual history

**Julia C. Schneider (Universität Hamburg)** – *The Qianlong Emperor's "Books Inquisition" (c. 1774-1788) in Modern Chinese Historiography*

In my paper, I will shed light on the research approaches that have been used to analyse and understand the so-called literary inquisition (c. 1774-1788) of the Qianlong emperor of the Manchu Qing dynasty (1636/1644-1912). The Qianlong literary inquisition or 'censoring project' has been condemned openly as an act of barbarism against Chinese scholarship and as a symbol of the Manchu rulers' general disregard of civilization ever since related material was first published in the 1880s. However, histories of the Qianlong censoring project have not been written in a vacuum, but in view of certain political and intellectual conditions. Firstly, they were in line with anti-Manchu and nationalist tendencies among late Qing Chinese intellectuals. Moreover, they reflected general understandings and experiences of censorship. After all, censorship of books and other media has continued to be a regular practice globally, and also in the Republic of China and its successor state on the mainland, the People's Republic of China. Moreover, research methods and primary sources' analysis of the Qianlong censoring project have followed a mostly positivistic and often rather uncritical approach so far, and it is about time to scrutinize and update such approach. Making use of censorship theories and methods of intellectual history, I offer a comprehensive analysis of the primary sources related to the Qianlong censoring project as such (book lists, memorials, imperial orders, etc.) and then focus on research literature about the Qianlong censorship project that has been published since late Qing times and until today, focusing on the question how researchers write about censorship under regimes of censorship.

**Lilith W. Lee (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)** – *I-Ching as 'The Book of Evolution'?: LIM Boon Keng's Medical-Confucian Account of the Development of Virtues*

LIM Boon Keng (1869–1957), a Straits Chinese philosopher based in British Malaya, hybridised late-Qing Confucianism with Scottish Medicine—as a philosophical system that has been recently termed 'medical Confucianism.' Lim argued across various platforms (e.g philosophical society sessions, periodicals, his translation

of the Li Sao) that a 'pure Confucianism' from proper study of the classics contained within it "the idea of evolution in its widest generalization," with an understanding of human nature thus harmonising with the insights of the Darwinists of his time. Uniquely among Sinophone Confucians at the time, Lim's knowledge of evolutionary science came not through Yan Fu's infamous (1896–1898) translation of Huxley, but directly through his medical training and research at the Universities of Edinburgh and Cambridge (1887–1894). In this paper, I attend to how Lim reinterprets the concept of rén (仁) through the phenomenon of paternal altruism—prefiguring similar attempts to modernise Confucian virtues by more recent comparative philosophers today (e.g. Donald Munro). In doing so, Lim offered a novel way to universally ground the Confucian virtues in human nature and yet also explain how expressions of such virtues and cultivation practices could vary across peoples—ultimately culminating in a Great Unity that preserved, rather than effaced, such differences. Unfortunately, I argue that Lim's way worked only in taking on problematic racialised assumptions inherited through the Scottish medical tradition at Edinburgh, and attempts to cauterise such assumptions from his medical Confucianism threatens either cultural homogeneity or irrelevance for cultural explanations.

**Philippe Major (Lancaster University)** – *Confucian Philosophers as Symbolic Emperors in the "New Confucian Manifesto"*

In this paper, I offer a new interpretation of a text commonly referred to as the "New Confucian Manifesto." Signed by four intellectuals associated with what is commonly known as "New Confucianism" (dangdai xin rujia 當代新儒家)—Tang Junyi (唐君毅; 1909–1978), Mou Zongsan (牟宗三; 1909–1995), Xu Fuguan (徐復觀; 1904?–1982), and Zhang Junmai (張君勱; 1887–1969)—the Manifesto was first published in Hong Kong in January 1958. So far, scholars have emphasized the text's philosophical significance or its socio-political dimensions. In contrast to such readings, I argue that the text is centrally concerned with establishing what I call "Sinophilosophy," an autonomous intellectual field that fuses the study of Chinese culture (Sinology) with Chinese philosophy. I argue that despite its open embrace of democracy in the realm of politics, the Manifesto nevertheless draws significant discursive resources from imperial polity in shaping the contours of Sinophilosophy. I suggest that the symbolic position the text assigns to the cosignatories in the field of Sinophilosophy is structurally homologous to that of the emperor in imperial polity. The Manifesto establishes such an homology at several levels, by portraying the cosignatories as a group of intellectuals (1) who are a living manifestation of the core that unites Chinese culture, (2) who have a privileged access to tian 天, and (3) who are inscribed in a patrilinear transmission of this privileged access through time.

**Joseph Ciaudo (Université d'Orléans)** – *From Sino-Babylonianism to Hellenic-Negationism?: Arguments in favour of the Chinese with Civilisational discourses*

In the early twentieth century, several Chinese historians engaged with Terrien de Lacouperie's theory of "Sino-Babylonianism," which posited historical links between Chinese civilisation and ancient Babylon. Previous scholarship—most notably that of Hon Tze-ki—has examined how these historians adopted, transformed, and appropriated this thesis within their reflections on the nation in an emerging global system of competing nation-states. Today, while Sino-Babylonianism has largely disappeared from scholarly debate, another form of civilisational discourse closely tied to contemporary redefinitions of the Chinese nation has gained prominence: "Ancient Western-History Negationism" (xifang weishi lun 西方偽史論). Proponents of this view—ranging from self-identified scholars to online commentators—depict the ancient Greek and Roman worlds, as well as Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilisations, as fabrications. Through such claims, they seek to assert the primacy of Chinese civilisation, presenting all others as mere derivatives or later offshoots of a single, supposedly pristine Chinese origin. The aim of this paper is not to contest the implausible assertion that these ancient oikumenai did not exist. Rather, it is to analyse both the argumentative structure underlying this discourse and the broader ideological framework in which it operates, particularly in relation to contemporary narratives about the Chinese nation and its global significance. By comparing early-twentieth-century Sino-Babylonianism with early-twenty-first-century Hellenic negationism, the paper identifies a conceptual nexus linking "nation" and "civilisation," and traces the evolution of argumentative strategies within Chinese civilisational discourse. Particular attention will be devoted to three influential texts by He Xin 何新, He Qing 河清, and Dong Bingsheng 董並生, with a focus on their efforts to dismiss the historicity of Greek civilisation.

[847] Shu Wei Tu (National Sun Yat-sen University(NSYSU)). *The Exile of Words: Diasporic Imaginations in Bei Dao's Extraterritorial Modern Chinese Poetry.*

**Abstract.** Bei Dao, a central figure of China's "Misty Poetry," is often remembered for his early works—such as The Answer—that deploy urgent apostrophe and crystalline imagery to resist political domination. However, after his

exile, a different poetic horizon emerges. Removed from his homeland yet bound by memory, Bei Dao confronts not only the dislocations of diasporic life but also the challenges of writing across languages, cultures, and the persistent burden of being politically symbolized. This paper aims to address the tendency within Mainland Chinese scholarship to overly privilege the poetry of the 1990s by incorporating the vital yet understudied sphere of "extraterritorial modern Chinese poetry" into the broader field of contemporary poetics. I argue that the condition of exile generates distinctive rhetorical structures within the Chinese language itself—structures shaped by displacement, multilingual negotiation, and the poetics of estrangement. In Bei Dao's work, these structures both transcend national boundaries and reaffirm Chinese as a site of cultural self-recognition and expressive necessity. By examining his extraterritorial texts, this study provides a more integrated understanding of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Chinese poetics, while also interrogating the multiple configurations of "Chineseness" that emerge through transnational circulation and global literary exchange.
**Keywords:** Exile, Diaspora, Chineseness, National Identity, Cultural Imagination

[848] Yutong Li (University of Cambridge). *"Most Excitingly Modern and Revolutionary": A British Zoo Professional's 1965 Tour of China and the Transnational Production of Knowledge about Chinese Zoos.*
**Abstract.** This article examines the circulation of information about zoos between socialist China and the West in the 1960s, through a case study of British zoo professional Caroline Jarvis's tour of Chinese zoos. Jarvis, then editor of Zoological Society of London's journal International Zoo Yearbook, visited zoos across China in Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Hangzhou, and Guangzhou in September 1965 'on a personal holiday.' She later discussed her experiences in popular magazines, public lectures, and correspondence with British sinologists, and incorporated information gained from Chinese zoo professionals into the Yearbook. By tracing Jarvis's tour and its afterlives, I suggest that zoos in socialist China were engaged in various, if somewhat overlooked, forms of transnational exchange, and positioned themselves as a part of an emerging global network of zoo expertise. Meanwhile, Western fascinations with Chinese zoos and their animals reflected a mixture of professional interest, Cold War anxieties, and lingering colonial imaginaries of the Far East's natural resources. While recent scholarships have examined socialist China's foreign affairs system and its management of 'foreign guest' (waibin), as well as how science and technology of China were embedded in transnational networks, this study takes a more granular approach to trace where one such foreign guest went, what she saw, and how she disseminated the information she acquired. In doing so, I demonstrate how unexpected actors and locales, such as 'unofficial' tourists and zoos, became nodes of knowledge and cultural exchange between socialist China and the West during the Cold War.
**Keywords:** zoos, animals, foreign tourists, Maoist China, Cold War, knowledge circulation, international professional networks

[853] Fritz Beck (Universität Heidelberg). *Controllability, transactionality, and decentral bribery: Imaginaries of local society through the eyes of the central Qin legislature, ca. 216 BCE.*
**Abstract.** Only in the past few years the contents of the Yuelu-Collection of Qin (221-207 BCE) bamboo slips and wood boards (嶽麓書院藏秦簡) have seen publication. In the fifth volume of this collection there are a few passages of great interest for the history of institutional law – but also for the very structure of law in Early Imperial China, a paramount influence for much of the subsequent legal codes and practices.
In one of the longer passages, a multitude of situations in which bribery might occur on a local level and the appropriate measures are expounded and thus regulated by ordinance. What do these very nuanced gradations of crime and punishment reveal about the moral and societal ideals of the legislative? Can we make statements about how bribery was conceptualised and judged on this basis?
Two of the main themes in this talk will be firstly the juxtaposition of state central and decentral conversion of monetary into political capital and its role in holding and sustaining the state's power in the newly acquired territories; secondly the analysis of transactions as a larger continuum of the human dimension of politics.
This talk is based on a thesis of mine, including an original first translation of the relevant sections, supplemented with the corpora of the Zhangjiashan (張家山) and Shuihudi (睡虎地) excavated documents, as well as with handed-down texts like the writings of legalist philosophers and imperial histories.
**Keywords:** Qin legal system, law, bribery, corruption, Qin, early imperial China, excavated documents, gift theory, early imperial society, bureaucracy, administration, local courts, philosophy of law, legalism

[855] Yitong Wang (The Chinese University of HongKong, Shenzhen). *Positioning Belonging in the Megacity Shadow: Spatial-Temporal Mobility and Identity Narratives of Re-migrant Children in the Shenzhen–Huizhou Region.*

**Abstract.** In the context of the rapid urbanization and integration of megacities and satellite cities in the Greater Bay Area, this study explores the experiences of re-migrant families—parents who work in Shenzhen or Guangzhou, while their children attend school in neighboring Huizhou. Building on mixed-method fieldwork, including semi-structured interviews with parents and children, participant observation in a public school along the Shenzhen–Huizhou border, and prior survey data (N=1,686), this research addresses the gap in existing studies, which have identified this group predominantly in the Beijing–Tianjin–Hebei region but failed to provide deep descriptions of their emotional and narrative experiences. Unlike previous research that views "re-migration" as a point of settlement, I show that it constitutes a reproduction of structural mobility. Families in this region shift between what I call spatio-temporal positioning stories: narratives in which parents frame their sacrifices as investments for the future, while children navigate a precarious sense of belonging—officially "local," but emotionally and culturally positioned as outsiders. Preliminary findings highlight how fragmented family time and cross-city commuting rhythms shape these positioning stories, revealing the complex ways in which stability, identity, and belonging are negotiated under urban integration. This study contributes to sociology and anthropology by offering a spatio-temporal perspective on educational inequality and the social consequences of rapid urbanization.

**Keywords:** spatio-temporal mobility, migration narratives analysis, family structure, urbanization and integration, educational inequality, belonging and identity, Greater Bay Area

[857] Zheyu Shang (Leiden University) and Zexu Guan (Beijing Language and Culture University). *Negotiating Gendered Moral Norms in Digital China: The Case of 'Gender Antagonism' on Weibo.*

**Abstract.** In China, gender antagonism (xingbie duili) has become a prevalent term in online debates about social and cultural issues, despite lacking a clear definition. Social media platforms, media, professionals, and users frequently invoke it when addressing gender-related controversies (BBC News, 2021; Zhu, 2025). Weibo, China's most popular microblogging platform, has updated its policies to categorize "inciting gender antagonism" as hateful speech and allowed ordinary users to report/review content showing this tendency in its participatory content moderation. These interventions demonstrate the platform's governing power over online discourse and the increasing moral tensions between official regulations, platform logics, and users' diverse imaginations of gender norms.

This study examines how Weibo frames and responds to gender antagonism, and what kinds of gendered moral norms are mainstreamed under platform-led, user-participatory moderation. While such participatory and playful moderation is widely adopted by many Chinese platforms and may reflect users' agency, it also raises concerns regarding the reinforcement of surveillance and dominant social values (Ye, Huang, & Krijnen, 2025; Shang, 2025). Drawing on scholarship on platform governance and gendered moralities, we conduct a thematic analysis of 51 monthly moderation reports published by Weibo between May 2021 and August 2025. Cases related to gender antagonism accounted for between 23.94% and 42.27% of reported violations.

Preliminary findings suggest that gendered moral norms on Weibo are fluid and co-constructed by state regulations, platform governance, and user participation. The labeling of gender antagonism often prioritizes linguistic civility over substantive feminist critique, positioning dissenting voices as morally problematic. It manifests a reason-centered understanding of morality and ignores the emotion side of morality (Krijnen, 2009). While participatory moderation appears to empower users, it frequently aligns with platform and state agendas, reinforcing mainstream, often patriarchal, values. Content moderation thus emerges as a contested site where gendered morality is negotiated, policed, and redefined.

**Keywords:** Gender morality, Gender antagonism, Platform governance, Content moderation

[860] Tobias Benedikt Zürn (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology), Markus Greulich (Leipzig University), Friederike Assandri (Leipzig University) and Alia Goehr (University of Minnesota, Twin Cities). *Intertextuality as Cultural Texture: An Orientation for the Study of Premodern Writings.*

**Abstract.** The academic study of premodern writings from Europe and East Asia comes with specific challenges, as these texts are often characterized by particular forms of intertextuality. Even though theoreticians like Kristeva, Barthes, and Genette, who introduced various conceptualizations of intertextuality since the 1960s, claimed that intertextuality transcends mere text-text relationships, its application regularly sidelines vital extratextual

elements. This panel addresses this gap by introducing the concept of "cultural textures," developed by Markus Greulich and Tobias Zürn for the study of premodern writings. By highlighting the significance of non-linguistic cultural artifacts and practices—like rituals, material culture, sensory perception, and non-linguistic media—when analzying premodern texts, our orientation digresses from two common attitudes: reducing "culture" to a mere context for texts and viewing "culture" solely as a text. For us, "cultural textures" are not just frames. They are integral to textuality and essential for grasping texts and their intertextuality. Thus, we advocate for a novel approach to intertextuality, a scholarly orientation acknowledging the complex, diverse, and transmedia interplay between texts and their cultural textures. To illustrate this orientation, the panel presents four cases from distinct cultures and time periods: the Huainanzi (2nd c. BCE); the Legend of Saint Servatius (ca. 1170 CE); Cheng Xuanying's (fl. 7th c. CE) commentary to the Daode jing; and Jin Shengtan's The Sixth Work of Genius (1656). By cross-engaging with these cases, we demonstrate that an in-depth understanding of such premodern writings hinges on reading them through the specific cultural textures, with which they are interwoven.
**Keywords:** Intertextuality, Huainanzi, Legend of Saint Servatius, Cheng Xuanying, Laozi, Commentary, Jin Shengtan, Romance of the Western Chamber, Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, Gerard Genette

**Tobias Benedikt Zürn (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology)** – *The Huainanzi's Intertextual Design as a Literary Strategy to Create a Cosmicized and Powerful Textual Embodiment of the Way*
The Huainanzi, a highly constructed writing by Liu An (c. 179-122 BCE) and his court retainers, shares more than a third of its approximately 140,000 Chinese characters with various pre-Han writings. Such a dense form of intertextuality poses questions about its functions. What is the purpose of this writing practice that mimics the process of weaving? It is common practice in the field of Early China to either attribute argumentative and ornamental functions to such textual parallels or treat them as a textual strategy to lend authority to less canonical texts. In other words, many scholars see an argumentum ab auctoritate at the heart of early Chinese practices of intertextual writing. In this presentation, I will show that such discursive functions do not always suffice to explain the extraordinary constructedness of highly intertextual writings from premodern China. By placing Liu An's text within the context of early Chinese court rituals, I argue that its intertextual style reflects attempts to incorporate the connecting powers of the universe in a cosmicized scripture. Hence, intertextuality served as a means to create a text that embodies the Way and its powers, enabling it to influence the universe through non-action (wuwei) and resonances (ganying). If we situate Liu An's text within the cultural textures of cosmicized objects and court rituals that were prevalent during the Western Han, it seems then as if the Huainanzi's intertextuality functioned as a literary tool to create a powerful scripture for the imperial Liu clan.
**Markus Greulich (Leipzig University)** – *Heinrich von Veldeke's Legend of Saint Servatius, Intertextuality, and the Textual Performance of the Credo*
The second case-study is Heinrich von Veldeke's Legend of Saint Servatius, a Middle Dutch hagiographic text from around 1170. Even though the Legend is from another continent and time, researching its intertextuality comes with similar challenges. It narrates the saint's life and his post-mortem miracles, highlighting his power to redeem individuals and lead them to Christianity. There are several hints in the hagiography suggesting that these stories were primarily intended for oral performance as part of Saint Servatius' veneration in Maastricht. In one episode, in which he encounters Huns while returning from a pilgrimage to Rome, Saint Servatius recites phrases from the Credo, asserting his Christian faith amidst mockery. How should we interpret this scene, in which the saint speaks the Credo, as all believers do in their own practice? Can we reduce this recitation to a simple text-text-relationship? Per my reading, the Credo's invocation not only signified the speaker's Christian affiliation but also offered listeners a chance to participate in eternal life after the day of resurrection and the Last Judgment. Beyond recording a story, the textualized recitation, thus, carries profound implications for its audiences since its intertext performs two types of agency when read within the cultural texture prevalent during the 12th c. in Maastricht. It affectuates nothing less than the salvation of the soul and deliverance from damnation, as well as the creates community among past and present participants, including Saint Servatius, the lector, and the audience.
**Friederike Assandri (Leipzig University)** – *Citation, Intertextuality, and Oral Teaching and Debate as "Cultural Texture" of Cheng Xuanying's Daodejing yishu*
Cheng Xuanying's Daode jing yishu (DDJYS), a full expression of Tang Daoist philosophy, presents a complex pattern of intertextuality: Firstly, it is brimming with Buddhist concepts and expressions, which have parallels in contemporaneous Buddhist commentaries. None of these are marked as citations. Secondly, it presents a dense net of explicit, i.e. "marked," citations of passages from the Daode jing, connecting different passages of the text to each other. Thirdly, we find explicit citations from the Zhuangzi, some Confucian classics and Daoist scriptures.

The yishu-style commentary developed from oral preaching and teaching. Cheng's DDJYS confirms this, as concrete remnants of such an ongoing discussion with the audience may still be found in his commentary. In this talk, I will analyze this type of intertextuality in the DDJYS from the perspective of "cultural textures," placing its dense fabric of intertextual references within a presumed setting of oral teaching and debate. How does the complex citation pattern work, if we consider it not just as a literary strategy for textual legitimation, but as part of a rhetoric and contemporaneous practice of teaching and debate? By understanding the commentary through the lens of "cultural textures," we may add depth and granularity to our reading of the text. In addition to providing insight into the Daoist positioning of their teachings in a vibrant culture of debate, it underscores the trans-religious or trans-teaching character of Chinese intellectual life during the Tang that transcended mere "sectarian" readings of this Daoist text.

**Alia Goehr (University of Minnesota, Twin Cities)** – *Jin Shengtan's Interworking of Chan Cases and Romance of the Western Chamber*

Romance of the Western Chamber was arguably the most popular Chinese drama in the 17th century, and Jin Shengtan's (1608–1661) densely annotated commentary edition, known as the Sixth Work of Genius (1656), was the most widely read version of the play. Yet Jin's edition presents an idiosyncratic reading of the dramatic form as a Chan case (in Japanese, a Zen kōan). His annotations are dense with concepts and quotes drawn from the Buddhist canon and repeatedly register the shared potential of Western Chamber and Chan cases to serve as spiritual and corporeal medicine. The persistent intertextuality of Jin's commentary thus invites us to study the drama alongside its "cultural textures," including Jin's annotated collection of Chan cases and Buddhist therapeutic practices. This interworking of textual forms and practices also needs to be understood as an interworking of two forms of performance. On the one hand, as Kevin Buckelew has observed in Discerning Buddhas, Chan cases operated as a mode of masculine Buddhist performance that held significance for monastics and their literati companions centuries prior to the maturation of elite dramatic forms. On the other hand, drama attained maturity as a genre in the century prior to Jin's commentarial ventures and served as a vehicle for exploring literati subjectivity, often through the portrayal of feminine figures. A full consideration of the "cultural textures" scaffolding the Sixth Work of Genius recovers the therapeutic dimensions of these interwoven modes of subjectivity alongside Jin's creative synthesis of textual traditions and practices.

[862] Maria Dorillo (University of Perugia). *Healing Within and Beyond: A Case Study of Diverse Medical Systems.*

**Abstract.** This proposal aims to present a case study of the interplay between medical systems in premodern China by focusing on the Mohe zhiguan 摩訶止觀 (Great Calming and Contemplation; T 1911), a meditation manual and summa of Tiantai Zhiyi 天台智顗 (538-597). A particularly emblematic example of this dynamic is the text's use of breath. On the one hand, it presents the "six qi" (liu qi 六氣) as therapeutic methods for diseases associated with the "five depots" (wu zang 五臟), following the theoretical framework of Chinese medicine; on the other, it introduces the "twelve xi" (shier xi 十二息) to address disorders of the "four great elements" (sida 四大), which belong to the Buddhist context. Hence, this suggests that Zhiyi was fully aware of the distinct origins and functions of these techniques and employed them as two methodologically separate yet complementary approaches within a single meditative path. This inquiry then serves as a starting point for examining whether the same interpretive stance is sustained throughout the section on the "contemplation of disease" (chapter 7). By presenting selected passages, the study will highlight how these two medical frameworks are deployed, resulting in a Buddhist perspective that nonetheless articulates itself through the terminology of Chinese medicine. In so doing, the paper seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions in the field of Buddhist medicine.

**Keywords:** Breath, Tiantai Buddhism, Mohe zhiguan 摩訶止觀, Buddhist Medicine, Chinese Medicine

[864] Sabine Hinrichs (University of Vienna, University of Hamburg). *From 'tribal thinking' and 'guest rulers': Approaches to the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) in Republican-era Chinese historiography.*

**Abstract.** This contribution examines how the Mongol-ruled Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) is represented in Republican-era historiography by comparing different approaches to engaging with non-Han Chinese history—against the backdrop of a yet-to-be-defined nation-state and an increasingly nationalistic discourse.

In Baihua benguo shi 白話本國史 (1923) and Lü zhu Zhongguo tongshi 呂著中國通史 (1940/44), Lü Simian 呂思勉, despite acknowledging the Mongol world empire (1206–1368), remains rooted in a Han-centred perspective and implicitly equates Mongol rule with subjugation under twentieth-century imperialism. In Benguo shi 本國史 (1925), Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 highlights the exchange between different ethnic groups as foundational to 'Chinese'

civilisation. Although recognising the Mongols' alterity, Gu adopts a more nuanced stance and, as will be argued, attempts an integration of the Mongols into the Chinese nation that is not based on assimilation.
Because general histories participate in shaping national identity, the portrayal of the Other is inseparable from the portrayal of the Self. This interplay is especially visible in the treatment of non-Han dynasties such as the Mongol Yuan. Neither Lü nor Gu aimed to 'make the Mongols become Chinese', yet the position they assign to a non-Han people has implications for the very idea of a modern nation-state. Amid unclear borders, debates over ethnic belonging, and the pressures of Western and Japanese imperialism as well as Mongolia seeking independence, their narrative approaches to the Mongols function both as acts of self-definition and nation-making.
**Keywords:** Chinese historiography, Republican-era, Mongol Yuan dynasty, Lü Simian, Gu Jiegang

[866] Han Sun (University of Oxford). *Ghost Writing on the Wall: Resistant Expressions in Contemporary China.*

**Abstract.** Writing on the wall, one of the oldest forms of human communication, has experienced a notable resurgence in China during the social media era, especially since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. These crude, rough, and somewhat illegible writings on the wall are frequently transformed into photographs—more precisely, digital images—which are uploaded to social media platforms, although many are swiftly censored. This study focuses on wall writings from 2020 onwards and proposes them as a form of silent resistance in contemporary China, as they serve both as an outlet for negative social emotions and as a footnote, complement, and counterpart to louder forms of street protest. Writing on the wall in the social media era is actually a multi-layered media practice. This article focuses on the media related to it and aims to answer the following questions: Why do people write on the wall in the social media era? What specific kinds of walls do they choose to write on? How do people access (banned) wall writings? This article will adopt the concept of the 'wall', which I propose has a dual and controversial logic—dis/nonappearance and manifestation—intrinsic to it. The Great Firewall and the walled area—the simplified Chinese cyberspace—will be examined to explore the speech environment that drives people back to offline communication. People mainly write on ruined walls, hoarding, bathroom walls, COVID-19 testing sites, and graffiti walls, considering the balance between the visibility of writing and their own safety. Based on its status in and between different media and the existential status of dissenters who write them, I propose writing on the wall as 'ghost writing'—'ghostly writing' and 'writing by the ghost'—in contemporary China. Compared to people who protest by holding white paper or written slogans in public spaces, people engaged in silent resistance are always absent at the site of writing on the wall. The sudden manifestation and disappearance of wall writings in both physical space and cyberspace also convey the ghostly effect. Moreover, its relationship with different media and its constant transition across platforms make it continue to haunt Chinese society, regardless of its non-existent physical body.
**Keywords:** writing on the wall, graffiti, resistance, censorship

[871] Aglaia De Angeli (Queen's University Belfast) and Victoria Bogushevskaya (University of Bergamo). *The Migration of Meaning: Entanglements of Ideas and Lexicon between China and Europe.*

**Abstract.** This panel situates the migration of ideas, images, and lexicons between Europe and China within the framework of modern history. From the seventeenth century onwards, encounters between European and Chinese scholars generated new vocabularies and conceptual debates that continue to shape intellectual traditions today. By tracing how notions such as modernity and modernisation were introduced, translated, and reinterpreted, the panel highlights the historical processes through which cultural categories were negotiated and transformed.
The discussion emphasises the modern era as a period of accelerated exchange, when scientific paradigms, linguistic models, and cultural practices crossed boundaries and were re-embedded in new contexts. Case studies range from the introduction of Newtonian optics and the codification of spectral colours in Chinese discourse, to the philological and ideological framing of folklore studies in twentieth-century China, to the imperial legacy of European grammatical traditions and their appropriation in Russia and China. Together, these contributions demonstrate how translation and adaptation were not peripheral but central to the modernisation processes that defined the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
By foregrounding historical trajectories, the panel underscores how intercultural entanglements shaped both European and Chinese understandings of modernity. It reveals the mechanisms by which concepts travelled, were redefined, and became embedded in state policy, education, and scholarly practice. In so doing, the panel contributes to modern historical debates on cultural identity, intellectual authority, and the hybridisation of traditions, offering new perspectives on the shared yet contested legacies of Europe–China exchanges.

**Keywords:** Europe-China exchanges, Migration of ideas, Conceptual debates, Intercultural entanglements, Hybridisation of traditions

**Aglaia De Angeli (Queen's University Belfast)** – *From Modernity to Modernisation: A Journey from Concept to Process*

The term 现代化 (xiandaihua), commonly translated as 'modernisation', occupies a central place in Chinese historical discourse. Yet its extensive use in English-language scholarship has often led to cases of being "lost in translation." What does modernisation mean for China, and how does this differ from Western understandings? Can the term be translated and applied across contexts with the expectation of conceptual equivalence? This debate, which began in the early twentieth century with the introduction and translation of "modernity," has remained open to wide interpretations. The semantic and cultural layers of modernisation reveal divergent trajectories: in China, modernisation has been closely tied to national projects of reform, development, and identity, while in the West, it has often been framed as a theoretical construct or universal process. This paper examines how the concept of modernisation has been translated, adapted, and reinterpreted in China, highlighting the distinctions from Western usage. By tracing the evolution of the term from concept to process, it demonstrates how modernisation in Chinese discourse reflects unique historical, cultural, and political conditions, underscoring the importance of contextualised translation in global intellectual exchange.

**Victoria Bogushevskaya (University of Bergamo)** – *"Naming Newton's Colours: From Jesuit Prisms to Mao's Mnemonics"*

The paper traces the centuries-long negotiation and hybridisation that shaped the naming of Newton's spectral colours in Chinese scientific and cultural discourse. From the 17th to the 20th century, China's encounter with Western optics prompted a re-evaluation of colour, challenging established cosmological and linguistic frameworks. Early Jesuit introductions of the "triangular glass" were regarded as curiosities rather than scientific instruments. Scholars such as Fang Yizhi integrated prismatic observations into the Five Colours theory, maintaining a material-based conception of colour. Ferdinand Verbiest's Xinzhi lingtai yixiang zhi 新制靈臺儀象志 (1674) discussed prisms but did not present a light-derived spectrum, reflecting the continued dominance of pigment-based models. Later authors, including Boming (Xizhai Oude 西齋偶得) and Zheng Fuguang (Jingjing lingchi 鏡鏡詒癡), likewise treated colour as matter, often dismissing prisms as mere entertainment (Bellemare 2021). A decisive shift occurred in 1855 with Benjamin Hobson's Bowu xinbian 博物新編, which systematically introduced Newtonian optics and defined the seven colours of the visible spectrum with consistent terminology. Hobson's nomenclature circulated widely, laying the foundation for modern usage. Mao Zedong's prosodically resonant line "赤橙黃綠青藍紫" ultimately codified the spectrum, embedding it in Chinese scientific discourse, education, and cultural memory. This study demonstrates that Western paradigms were not simply adopted but actively interpreted, translated, and hybridised, shaped by enduring Chinese linguistic and cultural conventions.

[877] Qi Shan (Waseda University). *A Temporal Ethnography of Firework: Between Silence and Explosion.*

**Abstract.** How do fireworks, with their distinctive temporality—from prolonged silence and waiting to the sudden spectacle of light and sound—structure the daily labor of making fireworks, the embodied judgments of artisans, the aesthetic experience of festivals, and broader social rhythms? This study adopts a temporal ethnography approach, focusing on how the temporality inherent in fireworks shapes both the daily labor of production and broader social rhythms. It illuminates how fireworks, as a pyrotechnic material, continuously transition between latent and explosive states, revealing how this dangerous and sensitive substance is apprehended and managed in craft, work discipline, and aesthetic practices.

Focusing on fireworks' temporality to explore their materiality, this study traces how firework-making practices have been historically reshaped in China—from ancient craft to contemporary industrial production—thus generating multiple forms of human–material relationships. Through a historical lens on these temporality-shaped human–material relationships, the study reflects on the unique position of gunpowder as a "Chinese material" within civilization. Furthermore, it proposes a novel ethnographic approach that begins with the material properties of things themselves, examining the philosophical implications of their materiality.

**Keywords:** Fireworks, Gunpowder, Temporality, Materiality, Chinese civilization

[880] Zofia Pieróg (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań). *Perception of metalanguage used in grammar descriptions: Case of Polish Learners of Chinese as a Second Language.*

**Abstract.** The Chinese Grammar Platform (ChinGram) aims at improving Chinese language education by increasing

access to high-quality, comprehensible materials for learning Chinese grammar. This goal is partially achieved by providing grammatical descriptions, interactive exercises, and teacher support resources in five languages (Czech, Italian, Danish, Polish, German). One of the project's issues concerned the metalanguage used in the materials published on the platform. The challenge was to formulate individual grammatical descriptions in a way that would facilitate the acquisition of Chinese, while simultaneously conveying grammatical knowledge in a comprehensive manner, appropriate to the subject matter. These difficulties inspired an analysis of this topic on the basis of Polish-language educational materials for learning Chinese. Through a comparative study of the metalanguage used in grammatical descriptions found in Polish textbooks for learning Chinese grammar, the most common approaches to describing grammar for didactic purposes have been identified. Given the dynamic nature of language and the changing needs of learners, the next step was to verify the suitability of these teaching linguistic practices for modern Polish learners. A survey conducted among students of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań on their perception and interpretation of different versions of linguistic descriptions provided valuable insights into the preferences and learning tendencies of Polish learners of Chinese.

**Keywords:** ChinGram, Chinese grammar, metalanguage of grammatical descriptions, acquisition of Chinese, Chinese as Second Language

[881] Ari Iris Fontana (Ca'Foscari University of Venice), Lauren Walden (Birmingham City University), Federica Mirra (CCVA, Birmingham City University) and Giacomo Cacciaguerra (Ca'Foscari University of Venice, Heidelberg University). *Constructing Visual Identities in the Sinosphere: from Soft Power to 'Post-Passport'.*

**Abstract.** This panel amplifies and complicates understandings of the contemporary Sinophone world by provoking reflections around representation, identity and Chineseness from the perspectives of visual arts and culture. From the local to the ubiquitous, the papers depart from regional case studies in the underexamined Hunan and Guizhou provinces in southwestern China, yet all papers are imbricated within a transnational context where artists and cultural institutions attempt to bridge the gap not only between the PRC and Europe, but even between human and non-human. Each contributor tackles different aspects of soft-power and 'post-passport' (Pollack 2018) identity-building through the lens of Chineseness, postulating for diverse reactions to three different strata: cultural, political and ontological.

Fontana and Mirra tackle these issues adopting a top-down approach, specifically investigating museums' and officials' curatorial and aesthetic strategies on the local and transnational stage; whereas Cacciaguerra and Walden provide a bottom-up narrative, elaborating on how artists redefine their identities and push the limits of their labels and categories. These contributions interlink selective pasts, presents and futures, exploring Chinese art and identity through their persisting points of tension (Fontana and Walden) or through their dynamic transformations and outreach (Cacciaguerra and Mirra).

By taking art-historical and ethnographic approaches, the four case studies are developed thanks to qualitative empirical visual analysis, semi-structured interviews, fieldwork, and archival research. Overall, this panel resists narratives of unity and coherence to provide up-to-date, nuanced perspectives on the role of artists and cultural institutions in experiencing and articulating Chinese identity in national and transnational contexts.

**Keywords:** Art and Aesthetics, Chineseness, Identity-building, Soft Power, Transnationalism

**Federica Mirra (CCVA, Birmingham City University)** – *Re-imagining shanshui hua: lightshow and soft power in Changsha*

A moving spectacle of mountains and waterways lights up Changsha's skyline, as one crosses the central Juzihou Bridge at night. This vibrant vision is part of the LED lightshow One river, Two banks (一江, 两岸), which illuminates the waterfront and skyline of the capital of Hunan province, for more than 25km every evening. Commissioned by the local government and the Department for Tourism and Culture, this LED lightshow stems from the cooperation among officials, real estate and lighting industries, as well as designers and engineers. This paper critically examines lightshows in Changsha to articulate how traditional landscape painting (山水画) is reimagined as soft power, boosting local officials' performance and the city's nightlife economy and tourism. First, it identifies the overlaps and differences with China's painting tradition, arguing that large-scale representations of mountains and

waterflows are -re-arranged on a three-dimensional canvas made of steel and concrete to create an immersive lightscape and extend the city image at night. Second, this paper untangles the power-dynamics behind the production of LED lightshows and space-making in Changsha, suggesting that they represent new ways to perform power by combining technologies, aesthetics and urban space. Thanks to on-site observations, photographs, and interviews with electronics manufacturer Leyard Group (利亚德光电集团股份有限公司), this paper unpacks how shanshui hua is re-imagined as an aesthetic strategy capable of reshaping Changsha's urban space whilst boosting a site-specific soft power.

**Lauren Walden (Birmingham City University)** – *Taiwanese Surrealism as 'Self-Unconscious Historiography'*

Surrealist strategies pluralise rather than polarise manifestations of trauma from an individual, psychoanalytic perspective fomenting a 'self-unconscious historiography of an epoch' (Adorno: 1970). Under Japanese colonial rule, Surrealism was broadly tolerated if government critique remained impalpable. Nevertheless, Shiotsuki Toho (1934) envisaged indigenous uprisings through surrealist mechanisms (Liao: 2010). Japanese occupation catalysed trauma in post-war Taiwanese surrealist artworks, suffused with internal repression provoked by Martial law (1949-1987). Huo Gang produced Dali-inspired sketches following surrealist automatism, deformed monsters coexisting alongside the everyday. In Untitled (1955), a prison-like setting merges into an omnipotent figure of surveillance, two books poised for candlelight reading. Psychoanalysis circumvented political censorship whilst expressing dissatisfaction. In 1964, Ho moved to Italy, his transcultural practice oscillating between calligraphic cursivity and abstract geometry. During Martial law, only portraiture and documentary photography were tolerated due to fears of a communist resurgence. Chang-Chao Tang's (1943-) photography subverted portraiture through iconic Surrealist imagery of headlessness during the 1960s to reflect violence and limitations on freedom (see Liu 2019:76). Subversive methods may have been tolerated for political expediency as Wei Hsiu Tung (2013:57) aptly notes: 'Taiwanese artists of the 1960s were after all, cultural representatives of the Republic of China at a time when the Cultural Revolution of the People's Republic was trying hard to eradicate any symptom of tradition on the other side of the straight'. As such, I argue Taiwanese Surrealism persists to present as meta-soft power though self-critique engendering 'bilateral historical introspection' with the mainland, shared trauma enabling reflection upon present-day tensions.

**Ari Iris Fontana (Ca'Foscari University of Venice)** – *Articulating Chineseness through assimilation: displays of Miao iconography in Guizhou and Europe*

What role does the assimilation of ethnic minorities play in articulating Chinese identity? This paper critically examines displaying practices at the Guizhou Provincial Museum and the Hui Foundation's runways at the SS2024-26 Milan Fashion Weeks to understand how Chinese identity is constructed locally and then projected internationally through the assimilation and reinvention of Miao iconography. Drawing on theories from Gender Studies and Museology Studies, I will compare events and exhibitions held by the two organisations in question that centred the Miao in their discursive and curatorial practices. Two trends will emerge from this research: the reduction of Miao identity into three key attributes (femaleness, youth, and rural backwardness) and the international projection of this simplified identity as a facet of a putatively modern and unified Chinese cultural whole. The gendered dimension of this reduction will be at the core of the discussion, as will be the role of the two organisations and their representation of gender and ethnicity to engage national and international audiences. Previous research on the feminisation of Chinese ethnic minorities highlights the dimension of internal colonialism created by an image of the Other constructed to consolidate the Self; I will therefore start from this idea to further complicate the image of Chineseness projected abroad. By so doing, I aim to paint a more accurate picture of the gendered dimension of PRC's internationalisation attempts, as well as to investigate questions of soft power and transregional exchange that remain intertwined with art collections and exhibitions between China and Europe.

**Giacomo Cacciaguerra (Ca'Foscari University of Venice, Heidelberg University)** – *Techno-eco ubiquity: the shamanic identities of aaajiao and Paolo Peng Shuai*

Between human and non-human, Beuys's 'shaman' embodied a connection to the transcendent levels of reality, across the material and spiritual. In the 1990s, the same metaphor was applied to Chinese artists on the global stage, described as magiciens and "healers" (Munroe 2017). Today, young Sinophone artists – stretched between Chineseness and Diaspora – inhabit the time-spaces of fragmented edge-lives. Moving beyond an ethnicising use of the 'shaman' category, they activate what Ascott defines "visionary pragmatism" (2000): through moistmedia, they combine ancient shamanic wisdom with contemporary scientific-technological knowledge. Resisting the limits of mediums (Yuk, 2025), they oppose the instrumentalisation of digital and material tools, to shamanically craft their realities. In the 1990s, the identity of "Chinese-diasporic artists" encountered Fei Dawei's call for "site-specific

individualism" (1994). Today, in the era of hyper-individualism, 'ubiquity' emerges as a central operational paradigm. Contemporary post-passport artists no longer rely on fixed specificities, but construct identities across distributed time-spaces. This paper examines two artists whose specificities employ ubiquity as a pragmatic tool to shamanically create realities. Paolo Peng Shuai, born in Xiangtan and raised in Milan, employs allochthonous plants to bridge his here-and-now with multiple else-wheres/whens, challenging the very notion of identity. aaajiao, living between Shanghai and Berlin, explores and subverts the limits of the internet, cracking its edges through the sarcasm of memes, websites and videogames.
Besides addressing the inadequacy of 'Chineseness' and 'diaspora' as theoretical frameworks, the paper observes the artists' trajectories through a socio-semiotic lens, integrating memetic studies and ethnobotany. Embodying a techno-eco nomadism, they inhabit the shared ubiquity of plants and computing, bridging technoetics and ethnobotany like contemporary shamans.

[882] Lisa Indraccolo (Tallinn University) and Salvatore Giuffrè (University of Thessaly). *Lost in the Maze? Labyrinths in Chinese culture and intellectual history through the ages.*

**Abstract.** China is renowned for its sophisticated garden culture. In contrast with the western tradition that embraces symmetry, the classical Chinese garden typically strives for harmony through the apparent irregularity of forms, promoting asymmetrical non-linear design. Consequently, the maze or labyrinth (milou 迷樓) – as a landscape element and a metaphorical trope – is not immediately associated with Chinese culture. It is often considered a largely foreign element that the Chinese imported through cultural exchanges with European envoys, and especially French and Italian missionaries, to the Qing imperial court. However, earlier examples of labyrinths do exist in Chinese premodern intellectual history, assuming original forms that are at times architectural – made of stone rather than greenery – and developing vertically rather than horizontally. Principles such as circularity, multi-layered arrangement, and vertical development that are typical of the 17th-cent. Renaissance garden do resonate with descriptions of the Chinese labyrinth in extant sources. However, the significance of the labyrinth goes far beyond garden culture. The concept of the labyrinthine and the labyrinth as allegorical trope are very much present and play a key role in both premodern and modern Chinese literary meta-landscapes. The present panel explores the representation and the multifaceted allegorico-philosophical meaning of labyrinths – whether real, imagined, imaginary and/or literary and narrative – in Chinese intellectual history and culture from ancient to contemporary times. Relying on pertinent examples drawn from texts belonging to different literary genres, each paper provides an original contribution to weaving the narrative of the labyrinthine in Chinese culture across the ages.
**Keywords:** labyrinths and mazes (migong 迷宮), Chinese garden culture, Yuanmingyuan, imaginary/fictional labyrinths, literary tropes, allegorical narratives, Chinese imperial literature, Chinese modern literature, Chinese intellectual history

**Lisa Indraccolo (Tallinn University)** – *Perplexing Places, Alternative Spaces – Non-Plant labyrinths in premodern Chinese literature*

Labyrinths (migong 迷宮) may seem a relatively rare element in premodern Chinese culture. They are often mistakenly considered a typically Western cultural and garden architectural element that was introduced into China only relatively late during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), with the Jesuit construction of the labyrinth garden of the Yuanmingyuan. However, there do exist earlier examples of labyrinths described in Classical Chinese sources that have played a major role in the intellectual imagination of literati throughout the centuries. The present paper focuses on premodern Chinese examples of "alternative labyrinths" beyond garden culture, i.e. stone labyrinths or labyrinthine buildings developing vertically. It studies two of the most famous examples of such fictional (?) labyrinthine constructions featured in premodern Chinese sources: a) the legendary "Perplexing Buildings" (milou 迷樓), a "pleasure labyrinth" allegedly build in ancient Yangzhou for the delight of the eccentric Emperor Yang of Sui 隋煬帝 (r. 604–618), who would entertain himself with his concubines there; and b) the "Stone Sentinel Maze," a formation of rocks and boulders build by the famous minister Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (c. 181–234) as a trap for his enemies according to the principles of the military formation Baguazhen 八卦陣 in the novel Romance of the Three Kingdoms. Relying on pertinent selected textual passages drawn from Classical Chinese sources, including both prose and poetic texts, this paper aims at drawing a narrative of early non-plant labyrinths in the imperial Chinese literary and intellectual imagination.

**Salvatore Giuffrè (University of Thessaly)** – *Labyrinthine Narratives: Borges, Ge Fei, and Yu Hua in Comparative Perspective*

This paper explores the labyrinth not only as a cultural trope but also as a stylistic experiment that transforms narrative form in modern and contemporary Chinese literature. Jorge Luis Borges's The Garden of Forking Paths (1941) famously reimagines the labyrinth as a textual structure of infinite possibilities, where recursive structures and shifting viewpoints embody the maze itself. Ge Fei, a prominent figure in Chinese avant-garde fiction, adapts Borges's labyrinthine poetics in works such as The Lost Boat (1987), creating narratives of repetition, negation, and disorientation that challenge linear storytelling and reflect the intellectual uncertainties of post-Mao China. Yu Hua, by contrast, employs labyrinthine narrative techniques to depict the existential and historical entrapment of ordinary individuals in novels like To Live (1993) and Chronicle of a Blood Merchant (1995). His episodic, nonlinear plots compel readers to navigate trauma and survival as if they were wandering through a maze. Taken together, these authors demonstrate how the labyrinth functions as a distinctive stylistic device in contemporary Chinese literature: a deliberate experiment with form that destabilises meaning, multiplies narrative pathways, and reflects the complexities of cultural transformation. By positioning Borges's metaphysical labyrinths alongside Ge Fei's avant-garde textual mazes and Yu Hua's historical labyrinths, this paper highlights the maze as a comparative stylistic device that extends the exploration of labyrinths into contemporary Chinese literature and illustrates its role in shaping Chinese imagination.

[883] Zijian Xia (Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg), Yang Ge (Durham university), Runyi Guo (Tianjin Normal University) and Sabine Weber (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg). *The ambivalent lure of technological myth: language, ecology and bodily transformation in late Qing science fiction.*

**Abstract.** This panel explores the underlying ecological and techno-ethical reflections in late Qing science fiction novels. Rather than reading them as merely the site of technological inscription, this panel demonstrates how the prefaces, postscripts and literary texts reveal the uneven, negotiated and sometimes contradictory narratives by which the technological modernity was imagined, constructed and unexpectedly questioned. The panel unfolds through three lenses: first, the inner ambiguity of science fiction functioning as both social pedagogical tools and literary imaginations; second, the spatial re-organization of the ocean from a premodern realm of wonder into a contested frontier of ecological and geopolitical risk; and third, the re-conceptualization of the human body as a site for technological experimentation, and in turn, the corporal and emotional subjectivity of human. Key questions include: How the variety of scientific imaginations was influenced by the narrative dilemma of social anxiety and literary appeal? How does the oceanic narrative revitalize and reinvent the classical oceanic-travelling tropes? Did the traditional ecological cognitions echo in late Qing science fiction? To what extent does the body serve as a site of negotiation with technological transformation? Our studies encompass prefaces and postscripts in Yuejie Lyuxing 月界旅行 and Xinzhongguo weilaiji 新中國未來記; the ecological and oceanic depictions in Jinghuayua 鏡花緣 and Yueqiu zhimindi xiaoshuo 月球殖民地小說; and the imaginings of human modifications in Xin faluo xiansheng tan 新法羅先生譚 and Shengshengdai 生生袋.

**Keywords:** Late Qing Period, Science fiction / kexue xiaoshuo, human transformation, Oceanic imagination, Paratext and discourse

**Zijian Xia (University of Würzburg)** – *From Wonderland to Danger Zone: The Transformation of Oceanic Imaginaries in Late Qing Science Fiction through an Ecocritical Lens*

Late Qing Chinese speculative fiction (ca. 1850–1911) reveals a fundamental shift in the oceanic imaginary, from visions of maritime wonder and abundance to depictions of ecological instability and geopolitical tension. The sea functions as a crucial medium through which late imperial writers registered the uncertainties of modernity and China's contested position in an emerging global order. Li Ruzhen's Flowers in the Mirror exemplifies a premodern maritime imagination grounded in cosmological harmony and exploration. Later texts, including Wu Jianren's New Story of the Stone and Huangjiang Diaosou's Tales of the Moon Colony, reframe the ocean as a site of extraction, technological experimentation, and environmental risk. These works transform the sea from a discoverable domain into an active, often threatening ecological frontier that both reflects and destabilizes the ideals of progress and civilization. Through this transformation, Late Qing fiction articulates an early form of ecological consciousness intertwined with imperial anxiety and the redefinition of China's relationship to the world. The oceanic imagination thus becomes central to the emergence of Chinese literary modernity, embodying the intersections of environmental awareness, technological speculation, and global modernity at the fin de siècle.

**Yang Ge (Durham University)** – *Reshaping the new human: The hesitating human transformation in late Qing science fiction*

This article explores the fantasies of human transformation and the underlying scepticism towards science in the early twentieth-century China, by analysing the literary imaginings of physical and spiritual modification in four late Qing science fiction works: Xin faluoxiansheng tan 新法螺先生譚 (A Tale of New Mr. Braggadocio), Yueqiu zhimindi xiaoshuo 月球殖民地小說 (The Moon Colony), Shengsheng dai 生生袋(The Bag of Secrets of Life), and Nyuwa shi 女媧石 (The Stone of Goddess Nyuwa). This article argues that narratives of human modification articulate multifaceted conceptions of the relationship between humans and science, transcending the dominant political metaphor linking the individual body to the the strength of the nation in late Qing. Second, the body becomes a site of technological experimentation, reconceptualized from a traditional integral whole in harmony with nature to an adjustable physiologic system. Third, the optimism about science peaked in late Qing science fiction, showing physically as the desire of bodily renewal and improvement, mentally as the substitution of individual emotions and desires with nationalistic enthusiasm, and ethically as the visualization and adjustment of moral characters by scientific measures. Finally, by analysing the dissonances in images of new inventors and explorers, this article reveals how the modern myth of human modification was constructed, parodied and unexpectedly questioned during the late Qing period.

**Runyi Guo (Tianjin Normal University)** – *On the Divergence between Theoretical Discussions and Creation Practices of Science Fiction in the Late Qing Dynasty*

Science fiction is an important achievement of the “Revolution of Fiction” in the late Qing Dynasty. Scholars such as Lu Xun and Liang Qichao endowed science fiction with the function of disseminating scientific ideas and enlightening the public in their prefaces and postscripts, laying the foundation for the development and promotion of science fiction in China. By sorting out paratexts such as prefaces and postscripts of late Qing science fiction, it can be found that although many translators and writers had slightly different expectations for science fiction, they all centered on enlightenment. However, when examining the translated and original late Qing science fiction texts, it can be seen that the effect of using science for enlightenment in science fiction was not ideal. Instead, science was frequently instrumentalized in these works, with descriptions of technologies focusing overwhelmingly on functions while sidelining principles. This not only made it difficult to effectively achieve scientific popularization, but also might evolve into another form of superstition, leading to a distinct divergence between the theoretical discussions and creation practices of late Qing science fiction. Taking this divergence as the research focus, this paper systematically sorts out the paratexts of late Qing science fiction, comparatively analyzes the creation practices of translated and original works, and explores the causes of the divergence in combination with the historical and cultural context of the time.

[885] Hou Menglun (The Chinese University of Hong Kong). *The implementation of Ten directions System during the Mongol-Yuan Period: A Case Study of Abbot Selection and Property Management at Lingyan Monastery.*

**Abstract.** This study explores the implementation of Buddhism policies and Buddhist monastic system during the Mongol-Yuan period. Ten directions System was mainstream monastic framework in the Song-Yuan Period, under which Ten directions Monasteries invited eminent monks from outside to assume the position of abbot . The selection processes were subjected to imperial approval, thereby enabling the state to strengthen their control over monasteries. The Yuan court implemented preferential policies towards Buddhism, including tax exemption privileges and establishing special bureaucratic institution. The Mongol-Yuan administration further stipulated that elected abbots must obtain court permission before assuming office. Lingyan Monastery was transformed into a Ten directions Monastery in the Northern Song Dynasty and most of its abbots in the Mongol-Yuan period were appointed by the court, with petitions issued by court serving as essential documents in the selection processes. However, these abbots belonged to the same dharma transmission lineage and were closely connected to local military lineages, which indicates that internal monastic factions manipulated state policies through cooperation with local elites. Lingyan Monastery amassed significant wealth during the Mongol-Yuan period, with property-related affairs such as disputes resolutions and land purchases becoming a key aspect of its internal operations. Although abbots were appointed by the imperial court, monastic properties remained under long-term control by monks within the monastery. Through an exploration of abbot selection and property management of Lingyan Monastery, this paper examines the strategies employed by internal monastic factions to navigate and make maximum profit from state policies and Buddhist monastic system.

**Keywords:** Buddhist monastic system, Ten directions System, Lingyan Monastery, Abbot Selection, Mongol-Yuan

Period

[887] Zhongyuan Hu (KU Leuven), Hong Lin (Shanghai Normal University), Albert Kozik (University of Warsaw) and Monika Miazek-Męczyńska (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań). *Assembling Knowledge: Michał Boym's Missions, Maps, Texts, and Scholarly Endeavours in Dialogue.*

**Abstract.** Michał Boym (1612-1659), a Jesuit missionary active in China during the Ming-Qing transition, produced a diverse body of writings and images on plants, animals, medicine, and cartography. Both his published works and unpublished manuscripts have recently attracted scholarly attention as key sources for understanding early modern Sino-European exchanges. Building on this momentum, this panel re-visits and re-examines Boym's historical importance from multiple perspectives by placing cartography, literary analysis, and the history of science in direct dialogue. Rather than approaching Boym from a single perspective, this panel considers the internal logic through which visual, textual, and epistemic practices intersect within his works, offering an integrated view of knowledgemaking across early modern Eurasia.

All panelists situate Boym and his works within multidimensional frameworks and intercultural histories. Lin presents the rediscovery and digital reconstruction of the missionary's lost wall map and reassesses its sources, methods, and unpublished adaptations to illuminate Boym's role in Sino-European cartographic exchange. Hu and Kozik examine how Boym's Jesuit identity shaped the production and reception of Flora Sinensis, tracing how his accounts circulated, were questioned, and overlapped with broader shifts in early modern epistemologies. Finally, Miazek-Męczyńska analyzes Boym's rhetorical style and identity and social persona as an author, shaped by Jesuit training and cross-cultural experience, highlighting the interplay of text and image in his scientific and cartographic works. Bringing these perspectives into sustained conversation, the panel moves beyond fragmented readings of Boym, highlighting how texts, images, and scientific descriptions functioned as interconnected sites of early modern global exchanges.

**Keywords:** Michał Boym, Sino-European Encounters, Jesuit Studies, Early Modern Epistemologies, Cartography, Latin Literature

**Hong Lin (Shanghai Normal University)** – *New Discoveries on Boym's Maps of China*

In 2023, Bnf purchased a fragment of one quarter of Michał Boym's wall map of China. In 2025, I found in Service historique de la Défense in Paris the remaining three quarters. These two fragments can be digitally reassembled, thus this important map, once briefly described by Paul Pelliot and Robert Chabrié in 1920s and inaccessible to scholars for a century was rediscovered. In this paper, Boym's sources materials, mapping methods and process will be re-studied. This wall map was made after Boym arrived in Rome in 1653. Boym mainly based on two different Chinese maps, one is a large wall map he carried from China, the other is the provincial maps in Daming Guanzhi, brought to Europe over half a century earlier by Boym's Jesuit predecessor Michele Ruggieri and transferred to Rome after Ruggieri's death. After this first wall map, Boym quickly reproduced at least two other wall maps of similar content. Not earlier than late 1654, Boym adapted his wall map into provincial atlas, undertaking many revisions to place names. However, both the maps and the atlas remained unpublished during Boym's lifetime. (New Discoveries on Boym's Maps of China, Hong Lin)

**Zhongyuan Hu (KU Leuven) and Albert Kozik (University of Warsaw)** – *Wisdom or Credulity? Michał Boym's Missionary Identity and the Transmission of Chinese Botanical and Zoological Knowledge to Early Modern Europe*

In the scholarship on the history of Sino-Western relations, Michał Boym's (c. 1612-1659) Flora Sinensis is renowned for being the first treatise fully dedicated to the plants and animals of China. Yet the work's reception during the period under review proved complicated, not least because of the author's own identity as a Jesuit missionary engaged in proselytising efforts in the Ming Empire. The aim of our presentation is therefore twofold. First, we seek to demonstrate that for some early modern audiences, especially scholarly ones, the fact that information about China was disseminated in Europe through Jesuit channels of knowledge circulation contributed to disbelief and scepticism, paradoxically diminishing the authority of the information itself. Secondly, drawing on this point, we examine this epistemological and methodological scepticism in the context of the shifting paradigms of scholarly inquiry in the seventeenth century, particularly those associated with the scientific revolution and the rise of empiricism. Using numerous seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources, mostly botanical and zoological treatises referencing Flora Sinensis, we will historicise the stories and descriptions included in Boym's work in the hope of showing that its reception was adversely affected by early modern shifts in scientific paradigms. (Wisdom or Credulity? Michał Boym's Missionary Identity and the Transmission of Chinese Botanical and Zoological Knowledge to Early Modern Europe, Zhongyuan Hu & Albert Kozik)

**Monika Miazek-Męczyńska (Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań)** – *Michał Boym SI – a Polish missionary who became a litteratus in China*
The surviving works of Michał Boym, a Polish Jesuit and missionary in China, but also a versatile scholar of Chinese history, medicine, and nature, offer, in addition to their strictly scholarly merits, an interesting research subject for literary scholars. In light of his official correspondence with the superiors of the Society of Jesus (including the "Litterae Indipetae") and his published and unpublished research works (including the "Flora Sinensis," "Clavis medica"), one can attempt to characterize Michał Boym's writing style, assess his rhetorical skills, developed during his education in Jesuit schools, and identify his favorite literary means of expression. A comparison of texts from different stages of Michał Boym's life allows us to discern his emotional development, emerging personality, ability to notice detail, and research sensitivity, which also gave his scholarly works literary value.
A separate element worth noting in Boym's work is the interdependence of text and accompanying illustrations (in his scientific works) and graphic representations and accompanying short descriptions (in his cartographic works). The interplay of the verbal and graphic layers, their correlations, and their complementarity constitute an important element in perceiving Michał Boym as an author aware of his own publishing goals, as well as the needs of the readers to whom he addressed his works. (Michał Boym SI – a Polish missionary who became a litteratus in China, Monika Miazek-Męczyńska)

[891] Caiwen Wang (Sichuan University). *Rooting Virtue in Self-Eclipse: A Moral Philosophical Interpretation of Shun's Filial Piety.*
**Abstract.** Moral inquiry, at its core, explores the principles governing interactions between the self and others. Mencius used the concept of “setting aside the self to follow others” to explain Shun’s great virtue. This not only deepens the ethical understanding of this relationship but also reveals its inherent unity with moral cultivation and political education. It further presents “filial piety” (xiao) as the foundational source of ethical instruction. This “setting aside” does not erase the self. Rather, the moral subject is dynamically formed and affirmed through ethical practices that connect the self with others. The father-son relationship represents the most fundamental form of this practice, elevating filial piety beyond a mere norm into the very ground where individual moral consciousness awakens and subjectivity is constituted. As the “root of virtue,” filial piety is both a concrete expression of the benevolent heart-mind and the practical basis for establishing the moral subject and enacting graded love. This framework provides a structural reference for rethinking moral foundations and offers profound insights for addressing the challenges of Western individualism.
**Keywords:** Setting aside the self to accord with others, Self-other dynamic, Filial Piety (xiao), The Moral Subject

[895] Ruoling Liao (the University of Helsinki). *Navigating Pain: Lay Healing and Urban Medical Landscapes among Older Adults in China.*
**Abstract.** This paper examines urban medical landscapes by focusing on the practices, circulation, and meaning-making of lay healing among older adults in China. While scholarship within China has produced extensive work on medical pluralism, traditional and folk medicine, and the sociocultural determinants of illness and healing (e.g., Yu 2021; Farquhar and Lai 2021; Li 2009), much less attention has been paid to older adults and to the specificities of urban contexts. Drawing on ongoing fieldwork conducted in 2026 in Chongqing, a megacity in southwest China, I follow older adults who rely on self-medication grounded in herbal knowledge as they navigate chronic pain. I draw on the concept of medical landscape to examine how older adults navigate an increasingly accessible and plural therapeutic environment, and why herbal healing remains an important feature of their everyday health-seeking practices in urban China. This paper focuses on how older adults use medicinal plants for pain relief, how they understand and engage with these plants in today’s urban environments, and what meanings these encounters hold for them. By tracing these practices, I highlight the embodied, relational, and social dimensions of health-seeking among older adults and show how lay healing persists and adapts within the rapidly changing urban landscape. This paper contributes to broader debates on medical pluralism and medical landscapes by foregrounding how processes of urbanization shape the everyday healing practices of older adults.
**Keywords:** Medical landscape, Self-medication, Older adults, Urban China, Chronic Pain

[896] Yining Sun (the Chinese University of Hong Kong). *Provincial “Extended Balance Sheets” and the Financialization of Local Governance: Evidence from Shandong.*
**Abstract.** This paper develops an “extended balance sheet” framework to analyze how Chinese provincial governments govern local debt under post-2017 de-leveraging constraints. Moving beyond a narrow budgetary

view, I conceptualize provinces as quasi-financial intermediaries that manage a pool of "quasi-sovereign liabilities" on the liability side (on-budget bonds, LGFV debt, PPP and service-purchase obligations) and a wide array of fiscal, state-owned and financial assets on the asset side (SOE equity, local financial institutions, and multi-level government guidance funds). Empirically, the paper focuses on Shandong, a high-debt province that has been pushed to the forefront of local debt resolution. Drawing on policy documents, budget and bond data, and case evidence on provincial platforms and funds, I show how Shandong has recentralized both liabilities and assets: issuing large-scale refinancing bonds, organizing province-wide LGFV restructuring, and using provincial SOEs/financial holding companies to absorb municipal platforms and repackage assets.
On the asset side, provincial capital-operation platforms and guidance funds are tasked simultaneously with industrial upgrading and with providing collateral, liquidity, and exit channels for legacy debt. I argue that this configuration constitutes a new "grand bargain" between the center and provinces: Beijing grants provincial discretion over asset operations and debt workouts in exchange for strict responsibility to contain systemic risk and halt new hidden debt. The paper contributes to debates on the financialization of the developmental state and multi-level fiscal governance by theorizing provinces as a "strengthened intermediary layer" whose power is expanded and tightly constrained by heightened credit and political responsibilities.
**Keywords:** Central-Local Governance, Provincial Governance, Extended balance sheet, Quasi-sovereign debt, Provincial debt governance, Multi-level fiscal governance, Financialization of the state, Local government financing vehicles (LGFVs), State-owned capital operation / provincial SOEs, China – Shandong case study

[899] Huei-Min Tsai (National Chengchi University). *Reconfiguring Literary Modernity in the Late Qing:Intertextual Parody in the "Phenomena of Shanghai Society" Column of Tuhua ribao(圖畫日報).*
**Abstract.** In the late Qing era, as Chinese society confronted Western artifacts and discursive formations of modernity, the literary field witnessed not only innovation but also strategic returns to classical forms. Contributors to the "Phenomena of Shanghai Society" column in Tuhua ribao(圖畫日報) employed intertextual parody and satirical imitation of shi (詩), wen (文), and ci (詞) as deliberate rhetorical strategies to textualize contemporary urban experience. Rather than merely mocking social customs, these writers activated tradition as a modern expressive resource, negotiating cultural authority, authorship, and the tension between historical continuity and epistemic rupture. Such parody functions as a site of literary self-positioning, where classical aesthetics are repurposed to articulate modern consciousness and critique emergent urban modernity. By transforming inherited textual forms into vehicles of social observation and cultural interrogation, these writers demonstrate that late Qing literary modernity was not simply characterized by the rejection of tradition, but by its creative reconfiguration. This study argues that these practices exemplify a distinctive mode of literary modernity that emerged through appropriation, tension, and hybridization rather than through linear Westernization.
Author's name: Huei-Min Tsai
**Keywords:** Intertextual parody, Literary Modernity, Pictorial, Tuhua ribao(圖畫日報)

[905] Xu Yang (University of Macau). *Between Wood and Stone: Architectural Representation and Variation in Medieval Chinese Funeral Art.*
**Abstract.** Funerary art constitutes a vital lens into life and culture in medieval China (439–1368). Previous scholarship on funerary material culture has largely remained within the disciplines of archaeology and art history, with limited interdisciplinary engagement. A house-shaped stone sarcophagus belonging to Hu Lian and his wife, now preserved in the Anqiu Museum, Shandong Province, dates to 1096 during the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127). Produced seven years before the official architectural manual Yingzao Fashi [Treatise on Architectural Methods] promulgated in 1103, this sarcophagus faithfully replicates a timber-frame hall, rendering beam frameworks, bracket sets (dougong), and other structural components with extraordinary details. It remains the only known example of its kind from the Northern Song period. In recent years, the author has employed measured-drawing approaches developed for Chinese timber-frame buildings to survey and document this sarcophagus. Building on this foundation, the present study integrates methodological perspectives from architecture and art-archaeological studies, situating the sarcophagus within the contexts of both above-ground architectural traditions and the typology of underground funerary receptacles. Analysis demonstrates that many imitative timber-construction details faithfully reflect eleventh-century (and earlier) building practices. Simultaneously, the sarcophagus conspicuously lacks the proportional canons and modular timber standards that govern actual wooden architecture. These findings illuminate a tension in the Northern Song period between officially codified technical regulations and contemporaneous crafting practices, as well as the complex processes of formal and material

transposition when physical forms migrate across media, regions, and scales.
**Keywords:** Funerary art, sarcophagus, Yingzao Fashi, timber-frame architecture, cross-media imitation

[913] Matthias Schumann (Heidelberg University), Paul Chen (Heidelberg University), Joachim Boittout (Université Paris Cité – CRCAO) and Zhenyu Xu (Cambridge University). *The Reconceptualization of Human-Animal-Relations in Modern Chinese History.*

**Abstract.** This panel seeks to provide a fresh perspective on China's tumultuous twentieth century by viewing it from a more-than-human perspective. As China's epistemic, cultural, and political context underwent a radical change, both the lifeworlds as well as the imagination of nonhuman actors experienced a profound transformation. Successive modernist regimes attempted to control animal species that were viewed as dangerous, wild, or unhygienic in the pursuit of elusive ideals of civilization and modernity while reshaping existing traditions of animal ethics that were increasingly seen as superstitious. These processes were not without friction, however. Drawing on equally new conceptions of evolutionary kinship or animal protection, vegetarian advocates and other actors criticized a utilitarian and anthropocentric understanding of human-animal relations, thereby exposing the fault lines within the Chinese reconceptualization of the nonhuman. Trying to go beyond a purely human perspective, the panel will also be attentive to how nonhuman animals shaped this reconceptualization by subverting human control attempts or by sparking alternative imaginations of animal subjectivity in literature and the arts.
**Keywords:** human-animal relations, modern Chinese history, discourses of civilization and modernity, animal agency

**Matthias Schumann (Heidelberg University)** – *Human Spaces and Beastly Places: The Regulation of Dogs in Early Twentieth-Century Shanghai*

Urban spaces have long been considered as anthropogenic or even nature-less spaces. This perception of cities as essentially human spaces is expressive of a new logic of urban planning and regulation that spread globally since the nineteenth century. Building on discourses of health, hygiene, and human progress, many animal species, which had long roamed historical cities, were reconceptualized as "pests" or nuisance and therefore targeted for eradication. This paper will trace how similar practices of urban regulation were implemented in the city of Shanghai during the early twentieth century. Focusing on the case of stray dogs, I will show how Shanghai's canine population, which had long carved out its existence within the liminal spaces of the cityscape, became the target of municipal policies that sought to reduce the numbers of stray dogs through electrocution and other repressive means. In this context, the legitimate status of dogs was radically redefined based on their relationship—or lack thereof—to human owners and the larger urban community. Shanghai, however, was home to a heterogenous community of residents with diverse views on animals. Accordingly, the authorities' eradication campaign was vocally criticized by local elites and emerging animal protection activists who rejected the killing of dogs based on alternative ethical theories drawn from Buddhist scriptures or Confucian-inspired morality books. The fate of stray dogs thereby offers insights not only into the changing regulatory logic of modern Shanghai but also into larger debates about the meaning and the place of animals within a swiftly changing society.

**Paul Chen (Heidelberg University)** – *Vegetarian Humanness: Emotion, Animal Suffering, and Changing Conceptions of the 'Human' in Twentieth-Century China*

This study traces the transformation of a newly emerging conception of humanness in modern China by examining how nonhuman animals' suffering was addressed in vegetarian discourses. Early twentieth-century Chinese vegetarians, drawing on local and global intellectual resources, articulated the moral significance of animal suffering through an evolutionary discourse of human-animal kinship. In doing so, they reconfigured the boundary between humans and nonhuman animals by emphasizing humans' moral and emotional instincts to sympathize with animals that are treated as human food. This study understands this formulation of humanness as both a continuity and a rupture within early Republican discourses of emotion. It challenged the human-centric and nationalistic limits of progressive discourse, which stressed the moral value of expressing love and empathy primarily among fellow nationals. This study also examines the decline of this vision by analyzing the anti-superstitious discourses of both the KMT and the CCP in the 1930s and 1940s, when vegetarianism was dismissed as superstition and nonhuman animals' suffering became invisible in major political formulations of moral emotion. Finally, it turns to textual records of vegetarianism in socialist China, exploring how affective concerns about nonhuman animal suffering persisted even as the concept of the human as a universal unity distinct from nonhuman animals was complicated by class consciousness and revolutionary politics. Overall, this study offers a more-than-human perspective on China's modern transition through the lens of humanness and the question of animal suffering, illuminating

changing moral imaginations and affective politics by thinking with the discursive trajectories of vegetarianisms.

**Joachim Boittout (Université Paris Cité – CRCAO)** – *Fighting Real and Imaginary Tigers in Fujian Province: 1920s to 1950s*

Fujian 福建 province, one of the provinces most affected by the menace of tigers (huhuan 虎患) from late imperial times through the Republican and early People's Republic of China (PRC) eras, emerged as a significant site for tiger fighting. While eradication campaigns have historically taken various forms, the early 1950s marked a notable political and organizational shift in this tradition. In this period, local Communist Party of China (CPC) cadres in the Quanzhou area, one of the most tiger plagued regions of the province, initiated extensive mobilization campaigns. These campaigns aimed to achieve two primary objectives: to assert control over local peasants through collective action and to eliminate big cats, whose encounters with humans were perceived as highly harmful and detrimental to agricultural production. This paper argues that the reality of tiger attacks, as a lived experience in the rural counties of the Quanzhou area, played a crucial role in the early PRC's grassroots mobilization efforts. Simultaneously, the political impetus for killing tigers resonated with an imaginary of "man-eater" tigers that had previously been employed by charismatic tiger hunters, such as Methodist missionary Harry Caldwell (1876–1970). Caldwell gained notoriety for his unsuccessful pursuit of a powerful and elusive blue tiger in the early 1920s. Following the establishment of the PRC in 1949, this imaginary acquired new political significance, as living tigers became symbolically associated with political adversaries of the new regime, including landlords and other "bad elements" targeted during the violent campaigns of the early 1950s.

[915] Philipp C. D. Immel (University of Würzburg). *Micro-Territories, Macro-Control: How Grid-Style Management Reshapes Grassroots Governance.*

**Abstract.** This paper investigates the evolution, institutional architecture, and sociopolitical implications of China's grid-style management (wanggehua guanli), a form of grassroots governance that has become a central component of contemporary social governance. Drawing on a comprehensive literature review that distinguishes Chinese and English scholarship, the study traces the genesis of the system from its early 1990s conceptualization to its first large-scale pilot in Dongcheng District, Beijing (2004), and subsequent expansions such as the Zhoushan experiment. The analysis foregrounds three analytical lenses: (1) the system as an extension of the "seamless government" paradigm, (2) its role in the transition toward a service-oriented state, and (3) the divergence between its original design and local implementations. Empirical evidence from policy documents, interview data, and case studies reveals that grid cells function as the smallest administrative units, linked hierarchically to linkage centers and handling units, while relying heavily on formalization, professionalization, and standardization processes that echo Weberian bureaucracy. Simultaneously, the system integrates surveillance technologies, datafication, and dual-use infrastructures, blurring the boundary between public service provision and social control. The paper also situates wanggehua guanli within broader governance discourses, including the "Fengqiao Experience," the social credit system, and the concept of suyuan zhili, highlighting how these mechanisms collectively reinforce a bottom-up yet state-directed model of conflict resolution and stability maintenance. By juxtaposing the system's bureaucratic features with its governmentality dimensions, the study elucidates the tensions between decentralization and hierarchical control that characterize China's contemporary grassroots governance.

**Keywords:** Grid-style management, wanggehua guanli, Grassroots governance, Social governance, Community administration, Governmentality, Bureaucracy, Institutionalization, Spatialization of governance, Surveillance, Datafication, Social Credit System, Fengqiao Experience, Policy experimentation, Institutional layering, State-society relations, Decentralization, Hierarchical control, Policy diffusion, Administrative layering and overlap, Stability maintenance, Service provision, Welfare governance, Disciplinary mechanisms, Digital governance

[917] Wen-Hui Yang (University of Taipei), Yi-Hsueh Lee (Tsinghua University) and Szu-Chi Chen (University of Taipei). *Embodiment and Spatiality Across Chinese Literary History.*

**Abstract.** This panel explores how embodiment and spatiality—from physical environments to emotional and ideological spaces—shape literary imagination in Chinese literature from the Tang dynasty to contemporary works. Through analyses of Tang poetry and modern fiction, it demonstrates the deep interconnection between body and space across genres and historical periods.

The first paper examines Tu Fu (杜甫,712–770), who, upon arriving in Chengdu, portrayed himself as an aging and

frail literatus. His physical weakness, combined with a modest residence and tranquil yet desolate landscape, subtly reflected political setbacks and unfulfilled ambitions, illustrating a spiritual dislocation in which ideals lacked a stable foundation.

The second paper studies Su Xuelin (蘇雪林,1897–1999) and her reinterpretation of Li Shangyin (李商隱, 813–858) via the "Theory of Romantic Love." By emphasizing the embodied experience of emotion and incorporating Western ideas of love, Su reconceptualizes Li's poetic expression, demonstrating how modern frameworks reshape readers' perceptions of sensations, desires, and literary meanings.

The final paper examines Yan Lianke's (閻連科, 1958--) novella Serve the People, highlighting how disciplined and eroticized bodies, domestic interiors, and language interact within controlled ideological spaces. The novella shows that the body can temporarily disrupt Mao-era spatial logic, granting characters fleeting freedom within a rigid environment.

These studies reveal that physical, affective, and ideological spaces—experienced and mediated through the body—remain central to Chinese literary production, shaping both creative expression and interpretive possibilities across history.

**Keywords:** Body, Ideological and emotional Space, Power struggle

**Wen-Hui Yang (University of Taipei)** – *The Body, Space, Mind Triadic Structure in Tu Fu's Early Chengdu Period: An Analysis of Physical, Spatial, and Mental Interrelations*

Renowned as China's preeminent poet, Tu Fu (712–770) confronted physical weakness, family hardship, and political frustration upon his arrival in Chengdu (760–762). His body and residential space exhibited a mutually reflective relationship, forming a triadic structure of "bodily distress—spatial modesty—mental perplexity." At this stage, he often described himself as old and ill, using his bodily weakness to delicately explain his political setbacks. Such portrayals subtly conveyed the deeper significance of thwarted ambitions and unfulfilled ideals.

Concurrently, he focused on depicting his residence and its surroundings. On one hand, he portrayed his dwelling as humble, reflecting daily hardships and conveying a sense of exile through political marginalization. On the other hand, he depicted the surrounding environment as serene and tranquil, yet imbued with ambiguity: within its calmness lay a sense of desolation. This spatial representation revealed both a composed acceptance of his fate and a quiet resentment born of thwarted ideals. As a poet who regarded himself as a "Confucian scholar engaged in worldly affairs," Tu Fu's weakened body and modest space ultimately reflected a spiritual drift in which his ideals found no firm anchor. Information

**Keywords**: Tu Fu, Body, Space

**Yi-Hsueh Lee (National Central University)** – *The 'Theory of Love': Su Xuelin's Research on Li Shangyin's Poetry*

The term 'lian'ai' (romantic love) is not originally Chinese nor a standard concept in classical Chinese poetics, making the 'theory of romantic love' an unconventional approach to studying Li Shangyin's poetry. However, this method has gained traction among contemporary scholars, largely tracing back to Su Xuelin (1897–1999), a significant figure from the May Fourth Movement. Coming from a late-Qing official family and influenced by both traditional Chinese education and Western thought acquired during her years in France, Su played a pivotal role in reshaping literary interpretation. She applied the 'theory of romantic love' not only to Li Shangyin's works but also to the "Chu ci" and ci lyrics. This framework has become central to understanding her as both a scholar and an individual, despite facing considerable backlash and criticism of her ideas as frivolous or unworthy of serious discourse. This article aims to investigate the introduction of the 'theory of romantic love' into Su Xuelin's interpretations of Li Shangyin, illustrating the resulting insights and their literary-historical implications. Ultimately, it seeks to provide a balanced assessment of Su's contributions to the study of Li Shangyin while highlighting the influence of Western perspectives on modern Chinese classical poetics.

**Keywords**: Su Xuelin, Li Shangyin's poetry, theory of love

**Szu-Chi Chen (University of Taipei)** – *The Embodiment of Space: On the Contemporary Chinese Novella Serve the People*

This paper examines the cyclical movement from a state of "no-body" to "the body" and back again in Yan Lianke's 2005 novella Serve the People. It focuses on the interplay among bodily sensation, sexual spectacle, and revolutionary discourse within an enclosed military camp that functions as a microcosm of Mao-era China. The central tension between official ideology and private desire unfolds in a Russian-style house, a space where the domestic and the political intersect. Within this setting, the protagonists repeatedly reclaim bodily autonomy, carving out temporary zones of personal agency. Their acts redefine the meaning of the domestic interior, turning excitement and desire into disruptive forces that destabilize the space's original ideological purpose. Language, meanwhile, generates layered interpretations that unsettle the dominant revolutionary order. Sexual acts—staged

as bodily spectacles infused with slogans and imagery—amplify the protagonists' subversive energy, otherwise suppressed by the disciplinary structures of the era. The narrator adopts the vocabulary of Communist revolution while inventing parallel, slogan-like expressions to describe intimate encounters. Through this playfulness, parody and satire emerge, exposing the absurdity of Maoist grand narratives. Desire and material longing release a counterforce that temporarily fractures omnipotent authority. Although political slogans were designed to convey ideological instruction, they become the very medium through which the characters voice frustration and assert autonomy. Yan Lianke ultimately challenges ideological control through narrative itself, constructing an alternative space within language—one that resists and reimagines embodied experience under authoritarian discourse.
**Keywords**: Yan Lianke, body, space, power, language

[918] Ying Zhou (Xiamen University), Guo Jin (Soochow University) and Zhonghong Xiao (Xiamen University). *Reflecting upon "Progress": Zhang Yaoxiang and the Science and History of Psychology in Republican China.*

**Abstract.** Zhang Yaoxiang was a key figure in the development of psychology in Republican China. Like many of his contemporaries, Zhang was a practitioner of scientific psychology and spared no effort to leverage psychological expertise for national progress. However, he distinguished himself through his keen interest in the past and his groundbreaking role in inaugurating the historiography of Chinese psychology. Despite acknowledging Zhang's dual roles as a scientist and a historian, existing scholarship has largely overlooked the potential tensions between these roles – particularly regarding how Zhang understood the historical past and its relationship to the present in an era that revered progress. This article revisits Zhang's engagement with the science and history of psychology in China from the 1920s-1940s. It argues that his perceptions of the past and present of psychology were associated with his evolving conceptions of progress and science. By the 1940s at the latest, through historical inquiries, on the one hand Zhang was able to localise psychology and interlink local knowledge with that of Western centres, while on the other transcend his professional identity as an experimental psychologist, to embrace a broadening field with various competing schools of thought. Through Zhang's case, this article offers a nuanced history of the circulation of modern psychology in Republican China and reveals the origins of Chinese psychological historiography as part of global historical traditions. It contributes to current discussions on the relationship between the past and present of psychology, as well as contextual approaches to the history of psychology.
Keywords: psychology, science, progress, history, localisation

[919] Olga Carlino (Nanyang Technological University) and Yuchen Feng (Nanyang Technological University). *Material Worlds of Chinese Medicine: Practice, Ecologies, and Epistemic Formation.*

**Abstract.** Chinese medicine has never been solely a textual tradition. Its knowledge has been made and remade through the movement of substances, people, and techniques across ecological, institutional, and transregional settings from its dawn to its contemporary use. This panel brings together history of science and material culture studies to foreground a methodological shift: from viewing Chinese medicine as a stable system of doctrines to examining it as knowledge-in-practice, shaped by situated learning, heterogeneous materialities, and the frictions of circulation. By placing historical reconstruction and material analysis into a single frame, the panel proposes a renewed approach to understanding how Chinese medical knowledge acquires form, legacy, and mobility.
The first paper follows the uneasy incorporation of maggots into premodern pharmacology, showing how local ecologies, cross-regional knowledge, and practical experimentation shaped debates over what could become a drug. The second paper traces the trajectories of oysters from being a marine animal in the ocean to becoming a drug in Chinese medicine, elaborating how the different materiality of oysters shaped their mobility across social worlds.
Together, these contributions demonstrate that Chinese medicine is not defined by doctrinal continuity but by the negotiations required to make knowledge workable. It shows how medical knowledge is continually reconfigured through encounters between animal bodies, environments, and shifting authority landscapes, thereby opening new comparative pathways for the study of global histories of Chinese Medicine.
**Keywords:** Chinese Medicine, Science and Technology, History

**Yuchen Feng (Nanyang Technological University)** – *Becoming Maggots: Substances, Technique, and Epistemic Making in Premodern Chinese Pharmacology*

This paper uses maggots and an inconvenient yet revealing starting point for understanding how pharmacological knowledge in premodern China grew out of practice and cross-regional knowledge rather than through any stable system. With their unmistakable material presence and deeply local ecologies, maggots appeared regularly in

healing work, yet they were among the last creatures to be admitted as ingestible drugs. That hesitation exposes the labour involved in determining what kinds of substances could legitimately enter the body.
Instead of viewing Chinese pharmacology as coherent, the paper follows the sites where practitioners confronted substances that unsettled their cognitive intuitions and classificatory habits. Maggots made these tensions visible: too concrete to be symbolic, too unstable to fit existing categories, too close to rot to align with emerging senses of efficacy. When ingestion became even thinkable, medical writers had to negotiate reasons drawn from local trial and bias, therapeutic need and transmitted technique, revealing how regional knowledge and broader textual traditions converged in uneven ways.
By tracing how maggots were imagined, resisted, and selectively accommodated from medieval to late imperial the paper shows that edibility was not a natural property but a fragile resolution achieved in practice during hundreds of years. In this small creature, we see how boundaries were redrawn and how Chinese knowledge took shape through situated, often uneasy acts of making substances usable.
**Olga Carlino (Nanyang Technological University)** – *Encounters Between Oysters and Chinese Medicine: From the Ocean to the Clinic*
This transdisciplinary paper explores the multiple trajectories of oysters (muli 牡蠣) from their role in the marine habitat to their versatile use as a materia medica (bencao 本草) in Chinese medicine (zhongyi 中醫). Until present, land narratives on animals have been predominant in the history of Chinese medicine. Hence, this paper proposes an oceanic perspective to explore the multiple material routes in which sea creatures such as oysters have been heterogeneously incorporated as a material object, food and medicinal ingredient in Taiwan. Oysters are a sessile organism spending almost all of their life in a spot contributing to many ecosystem services, consequently they have been referred to as climate sentinels and eco-engineers. However, beyond their significant function in the marine biome and their circulation in foodways, oysters are a popular animal-based drug in Chinese medicine. Nowadays, muli are prescribed by Chinese medicine physicians for pathological conditions such as: insomnia, irritability, dizziness, anxiety and others. This paper argues that the encounters between oysters in the ocean and Chinese medicine in the clinic have been influenced by the particular materiality of this bivalve's body which is composed of different strata: two hard shells, the soft meat and a shiny pearl. This materiality has determined the mobility of oysters across different social worlds.

[920] Xinyi Li (University of Bologna). *Emotions in Motion: A Comparative Study of Emotion in Chinese Translations of Cuore.*
**Abstract.** Written by Edmondo de Amicis in 1886, Cuore is widely regarded as a landmark in children's literature and has played a significant role in shaping modern Chinese literary culture since its first translation in 1910. Over the past century, numerous Chinese versions of the novel have appeared, each reflecting the linguistic norms, expressive habits, and cultural expectations of its time. This study investigates the translation of emotional expressions across several representative Chinese versions of Cuore, a topic that has received limited scholarly attention.
Using the chapter Dagli Appennini alle Ande as a focused example, the research undertakes both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Methodologically, the study employs corpus preprocessing, emotion-word annotation, and a combined deductive–inductive coding process informed by Plutchik's model of basic emotions and other established emotion taxonomies, followed by systematic frequency-based comparison across translations. Quantitative analysis examines frequency patterns, shifts in lexical choices, and the distribution of different types of emotions, while qualitative comparison highlights nuances of tone, variations in semantic intensity, and cases of interpretive divergence or omission.
By correlating these findings with broader linguistic and historical contexts, the study reveals how translators' choices embody changing norms of written vernacular Chinese as well as evolving cultural understandings of emotion in children's literature. The research contributes to ongoing discussions on translation strategies, affective expression, and cross-cultural literary transmission between Italian and Chinese.
**Keywords:** Cuore, Chinese translations, emotion translation, corpus-based analysis, children's literature

[927] Federica Casalin (University of Rome Sapienza), Alessandra Brezzi (University of Rome Sapienza) and Renata Vinci (University of Palermo). *How Have "We" Approached Chinese Literature? Quantitative and Qualitative Insights from the Italian Context (1900-1970).*
**Abstract.** Building on the observation that there are "different ways in which the word 'Sinology' (and its various linguistic cognates) is understood around the world" (Fogel 2023, 254), this panel situates Italian scholarship on

Chinese literature within the broader history of Italian Sinology, offering a case study in the knowledge-production processes shaping the selection, mediation, and circulation of Chinese literature across a seventy-year period, from the beginning of the 20th century to the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between the Italian Republic and the People's Republic of China in 1970. The use of digital-humanities tools applied to a database of sinological sources containing scholarly essays on, and translations of pre-modern and modern Chinese literary works will offer a quantitative perspective aimed at identifying the agents involved in the process of cultural mediation, the choices they enacted, the factors that guided them, and the possible outcomes in terms of distribution and cultural impact. The qualitative analysis, by contrast, will seek to elucidate the theoretical approaches embedded in a selection of critical essays, paratextual materials, and translations. The panel thus seeks to bring into focus some specific configurations of Italian Sinology's engagement with Chinese literature in the period under consideration, while also providing a methodological and substantive basis for comparison with other historical moments and/or sinological traditions, as well as for more critically informed practices in the present and future.
**Keywords:** Italian Sinology, Chinese literature, Digital bibliographic catalogue, Quantitative analysis, Critical paradigms

**Federica Casalin (University of Rome Sapienza)** – *Chinese Pre-Modern Literature in Italy (1900–1970): Quantitative Insights and a Critical Reappraisal*
Drawing on the digitized bibliographic repertoire created by the MaCSI-DA (Mapping China Studies in Italy: A Digital Archive) research project, this paper first situates studies on Chinese literature published in Italy from 1900 to 1970 within the broader sinological scholarship produced in the same period, in order to illuminate the epistemic priorities that informed Italian approaches to China during those decades and to assess the relative weight of literary studies within them. Building on this contextual mapping, the paper then turns to a closer examination of studies on pre-modern literature, highlighting their distribution across time and space, the range of textual types involved (including translations, critical essays, anthologies, and literary histories), the professional profiles of their authors, and the resulting hierarchies of Chinese literary genres as they were presented to Italian readers. The quantitative analysis will be supplemented by a qualitative study aimed at investigating the relevance, nature, and both the explicit and implicit paradigms that shaped critical commentary, focusing in particular on selected essays and excerpts discussing the novel Hongloumeng 紅樓夢. This case study will serve as a basis for determining whether, and to what extent, Chinese and Western paradigms of literary criticism informed Italian sinological practices during the period under consideration.
**Alessandra Brezzi (University of Rome Sapienza)** – *Mapping Italy's First Encounters with Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature (1900–1970)*
This paper aims to offer a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the reception of modern and contemporary Chinese literature in Italy from 1900 to 1970. Through an examination of translations, anthologies, and critical essays published during this seventy-year span, and using quantitative data extracted from the MaCSI-DA database, the study maps the genres, authors, translators or mediators involved in this cultural dialogue with the aim of reconstructing and analysing the forms of knowledge about China—and, more specifically, about modern and contemporary Chinese literature—that were disseminated through these texts. By mapping the intermediaries who shaped this cultural transfer and the channels of dissemination, including scholarly journals, literary magazines, and publishing houses, the study investigates which Italian environments were especially active in promoting Chinese literature and how their agendas influenced the selection, framing, and interpretation of Chinese texts, and what images of China and its literature emerge from these materials. The paper will primarily focus on a sample of paratexts, as instruments that guide reading and influence interpretation, providing readers with a filtered access (Genette, 1997); it will also examine translators within their socio-cultural contexts, as advocated by translator studies (Chesterman, 2009; Wolf 2010).
**Renata Vinci (University of Palermo)** – *Reframing Chinese Literature through the European Classical Context: The Transcultural Competence of the Forgotten Sinologist Giuseppe Barone (1861-1924)*
This study reassesses the work of Giuseppe Barone (1861–1924), a long-forgotten scholar recently rediscovered through archival research which reconstructed his corpus and revealed his transcultural engagement with Chinese sources: Barone's writings, including literary translations and essays, demonstrate his attempt to integrate Chinese literature into an interpretive framework shaped by his education in Greco-Roman classics and his Oriental studies. This paper introduces Barone's role in the dissemination of Chinese literature and knowledge of Chinese language and civilization in Italy and Europe. His readership ranged from specialized scholars to general magazine audiences, prompting the development of multilayered explanatory strategies. His extensive paratexts and annotations reveal

an explicit pedagogical approach aimed at making Chinese texts accessible through analogies with Classical and European literature, historiography, ethics, and narrative. His work also incorporates comparative linguistic analysis drawing on Ancient Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Arabic, and Hebrew—languages in which Barone was trained. A selection of representative case studies from Barone's corpus will illustrate how his use of classical analogies, cross-cultural comparisons, and interlinguistic notes constituted a remarkably modern strategy for mediating Chinese literature to European audiences. By foregrounding these strategies, the study argues that the rediscovery of Barone not only restores an overlooked figure to the history of Italian sinology but also highlights his pioneering role in shaping the early reception of Chinese literature through a consciously transcultural methodology.

[928] Yu Wang (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München（LMU München）). *Revisiting Xiong Shili（熊十力）'s "Theory of Ti and Yong(體用论)" through Mou Zongsan（牟宗三）'s Critique.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines Xiong Shili's (1885–1968) innovative interpretation of the classical Chinese concept of"ti yong bu er"(體用不二，unity of substance and function) and its transformative impact on Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism, using Mou Zongsan's (1909–1995) critique as a lens. Xiong's theory reconceptualizes "substance" (ti) as a dynamic, self-manifesting principle, emphasizing its inherent vitality and creative activity, while "function" (yong) is understood as the natural expression of this intrinsic and contrasting momentum（xi 翕 and pi 辟）. This approach diverges from the mainstrain of traditional Neo-Confucian framework, in which substance (li 理) is primarily static and governs the generative medium (qi 氣) externally. By integrating Buddhist metaphysical insights, Xiong effectively reverses the Song-Ming priority of moral self-discipline over ontological foundation, proposing a system in which ethical manifestation flows organically from a self-realizing cosmic principle.

Mou Zongsan's critique illuminates the originality of his teacher's approach. In two polemical papers, he contends that Xiong's "unity of substance and function" overemphasizes a cosmological vitality at the expense of the moral subject's autonomous ethical activity, thereby reducing the emphasis on individual moral responsibility central to Neo-Confucian thought. Nevertheless, Mou's criticisms underscore the philosophical significance of Xiong's project: the creative synthesis of Confucian ethical concerns with Buddhist metaphysical depth, transforming static principle into a living, self-manifesting ground for moral and cosmological order. This study concludes that Xiong Shili's reinterpretation constitutes a radical yet coherent modification of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism, situating ethical practice within a dynamic, ontologically unified framework and offering new perspectives for contemporary studies of Chinese philosophy.

**Keywords:** Xiong Shili 熊十力, Theory of Ti and Yong(體用论), Xi 翕 and Pi 辟, Mou Zongsan 牟宗三

[930] Jiazheng Wang (University of Nottingham). *Deterritorialising Desire: Sex Toys, Feminist Erotics and Posthuman Sexual Subjectivities of Young Chinese Women in Digital China.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines emergent sexual subjectivities among young Chinese women as they engage in sex toy use as feminist practices of self-pleasure within a rapidly shifting digital and sociopolitical landscape. These intimate practices open cracks in the hegemonic heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990), revealing new possibilities for posthuman sexual subjectivities within contemporary Chinese gender culture. Grounded in feminist posthumanist philosophy, particularly Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) affect theory and assemblage thinking and Barad's (2008) concept of intra-action, the study utilises a post-qualitative, diffractive methodology that treats theories, data, and researcher as intra-actively entangled. The research thinks-with theoretical concepts and participants, approaching sexuality as assemblages: material and discursive forces formed through relationalities among bodies, technologies, markets, platforms, gendered sexual scripts, and feminist discourses.

Based on forty in-depth interviews with Chinese women aged 21-32, the analysis maps three key sexuality assemblages: sex toys as material-affective forces that disrupt phallogocentric norms and create micropolitical shifts in desire; body-hormone-technology relations, where sensations, libidos, hormonal fluctuations and technological devices co-constitute sexual becomings; and digital-market-feminist assemblages, in which influencers, livestreams, digital economies, platform algorithms, and censorship intra-act. These complex assemblages generate lines of flight that temporarily unsettle and recoup binary logics, producing ongoing processes of deterritorialisations and reterritorialisations. This paper conceptualises young Chinese women's entanglements with sex toys as affective-material assemblages through which feminist pleasure and sexuality are continuously becoming, illuminating emergent possibilities for sexual liberation and alternative sexual subjectivities despite increasing social suppression and state regulation of women's freedoms in digital China.

**Keywords:** sexual subjectivity, sex toys, affect, Chinese studies, gender and sexuality studies, feminist posthumanism, digital feminism

[932] Linda Anna Pietrasanta (Ca' Foscari University of Venice) and Haoyang Fu (Leiden University & University of Perugia). *Towards a Transcultural Co-originality and Beyond: Xiong Shili 熊十力 in dialogue with Nicholas of Cusa.*

**Abstract.** This paper presents the results of a seminar series held at the University of Perugia dedicated to the philosophical investigation of dualisms—especially in their ontological dimensions—through a comparative methodology. The seminar explored how different philosophical traditions articulate the relation between foundational pairs, asking whether such dualities should be conceived as co-original, mutually dependent, or ultimately grounded in a higher unity.

Within this framework, the present contribution brings into dialogue two thinkers separated by significant historical and cultural distances—Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885–1968) and Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464)—who nevertheless confront analogous metaphysical concerns. Central to both thinkers' philosophical projects is the question of how to understand and negotiate key ontological oppositions. Xiong Shili's ti–yong metaphysics and Nicholas of Cusa's non aliud–aliud dialectics represent two distinct yet comparable attempts to address the same foundational issue. In different conceptual vocabularies, both philosophers ask what fundamental relation binds everything that appears to that which makes appearance possible in the first place.

By juxtaposing Xiong's ti–yong with Nicholas's non aliud, this contribution aims to serve as a concrete example of comparative philosophical practice and to pursue two closely related aims. First, it highlights the ways in which both thinkers—each in his own manner—suggest a form of co- origination and mutual implication between the two poles. Second, it examines the theoretical implications that arise from adopting such ontological perspectives. The goal is not merely to revisit the familiar oscillation between dualism and monism; rather, it is to consider whether overcoming this oscillation may itself constitute a new point of departure for transcultural philosophical reflection.

**Keywords:** Comparative Philosohy, Chinese Philosophy, Ontology, Ontological Dualism

[933] Ardita Osmani (University of Duisburg-Essen). *Practicing Citizenship in the Diaspora: Feminism and Digital tools.*

**Abstract.** Chinese migrants are often characterized as politically disengaged in their host societies, even as collective protest and civic participation remain vibrant in China. These forms of active citizenship, however, have faced increasing repression, particularly affecting feminist organizing, which has been pushed to the margins of public discourse through censorship and online backlash. At the same time, transnational feminist activism has flourished, creating new channels for cross-border dialogue, solidarity, and digital mobilization. (Huang, 2025)

Within this global scenario, Chinese migrant women in Italy are beginning to develop grassroots feminist networks that draw inspiration from both Chinese and international feminist debates while adapting them to local realities. Scholarship on migration from the People's Republic of China to Italy has largely focused on entrepreneurship and informal labor (Ceccagno, 2017), leaving political and gendered dimensions of community life underexplored.

Building on conceptualizations of citizenship as practice rather than legal status (Bloemraad, 2018; Isin & Nielsen, 2015) and on scholarship that highlights the centrality of digital infrastructures to migration (Leurs, 2023; Preiss, 2022), this paper investigates how Chinese migrant women in Italy use digital platforms to build transnational feminist networks and enact new forms of citizenship that exceed both Chinese state control and host-country constraints. The analysis draws on a mixed-methods qualitative approach, including semi-structured interviews with four Chinese migrant women engaged in feminist organizing, participant observation of community-led initiatives and local feminist mobilizations, and digital ethnography of feminist networks across both the Chinese and Western digital spheres. Using thematic analysis, the paper identifies emerging modes of Sinophone feminist citizenship shaped through digital connectivity, grassroots mobilization, and transnational engagement.

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**Keywords:** Feminist activism, Digital infrastructures, Citizenship as practice, Gender and migration

[936] Yutong Li (Università di Bologna). *Re-curating the "Hidden Century": Diasporic Agency and Digital Responses to the British Museum Exhibition on Xiaohongshu.*

**Abstract.** China's Hidden Century (British Museum, 2023) offered a wide-ranging account of nineteenth-century China within a Western curatorial framework. Its digital afterlife proved equally significant, drawing sustained attention from Chinese diasporic publics on Xiaohongshu (RedNote), where the exhibition circulated through user-generated images and commentary. This poster examines how these communities reinterpreted key aspects of the show and shifted its emphasis through everyday visual practices on the platform.

Focusing on high engagement objects such as the Dian Shizhai Pictorial, court portraiture, and textile materials, the study traces how users reframed these works as they moved across Xiaohongshu. Their posts redirected visual focus, rewrote captions, and brought humour, nostalgia, or affective resonance to the reading of imperial era artefacts. To illustrate these patterns, the poster presents three visual components: a Re-focalisation Map comparing institutional points of emphasis with those highlighted by users, a Circulation Diagram mapping how selected objects travelled through algorithm-shaped feeds, and a Typology of Re-curation outlining recurring modes of diasporic intervention.

By examining how museum narratives are taken up and transformed in platform settings, the project contributes to current discussions in Museum Studies and Digital Humanities. It shows how heritage objects are re-read in digital publics and how diasporic users participate in shaping what becomes visible, relevant, or contested within contemporary cultural circulation.

**Keywords:** digital re-curation, museum interpretation, diasporic Chinese publics, social media practices

[937] Yixue Linghu (Peking University), Erin Hagood (Columbia University), Christina Cho (Peking University), Benjamin Birkenstock (The Chinese University of Hong Kong) and Helen Bovi (Stanford University). *Neglected Chinese Sources for Contemporary Concerns: Ethics, Politics, and Religion Between Constancy and Transformation.*

**Abstract.** This panel will look at several influential Chinese figures and texts overlooked in academic literature and examine their contemporary significance for navigating challenges along the axis of constancy and change. In a world in which binaries continue to crystallize into irresolvable opposition, including continued depictions of China as either inscrutably other or merely a new world power, these sources instructively present unpredictability and pattern as mutually inclusive. In the political realm, for example, Liu Shao's (劉劭) late-Han method for corresponding "names" (ming, 名) to "reality" (shi, 實) reveals how dynamic forms of classification can be used aid true discernment of character. At the intersection of the political and the religious, the writings of Liang Fa (梁發)–China's first Protestant minister and newspaper authour–complicate straightforward narratives of the role of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity in imperial encounters with the West. The fluid ability of religion to address people's needs is further illustrated by Nāgārjuna's Treatise on the Five Sciences (龍樹五明論), a Tang Buddhist ritual manual, which incorporates Indic and Chinese Buddhist and Daoist sources in order to imbue talismans with efficacy. Turning to personal cultivation, reading Ji Kang's (西康) Wei-Jin era essays in light of current cognitive science reveals how conscious deliberation is most effective when it reduces its hold on emotion and desire rather than dominating them. Our panel will be capped off by an engagement with Zhuangzian philosophy from the perspectives of naturalist ethics and post-Nietzschean agency, showing how Zhuangzi's radical perspectivism enables concrete pathways for agency and normativity.

**Keywords:** Religion and Philosophy, Han and Wei-Jin Thought, Liang Fa, Ji Kang and Xuanxue, Intellectual History, Nāgārjuna's Treatise on the Five Sciences (龍樹五明論), Interdisciplinary Humanities, Daoist Ethics

**Yixue Linghu (Peking University)** – *The Distinction between Name and Reality: A Classical Response from Liu Shao's Renwuzhi to the Epistemic Dilemma of Meritocracy*

This paper focuses on the most fundamental "epistemic dilemma" within the theory of meritocracy: the reliability crisis inherent in the inevitable disjunction between "names" (ming, 名) and "reality" (shi, 实) within selection mechanisms. It begins by systematically tracing the critique from Michael Young's original satire to contemporary denunciations of "credentialism", revealing the risks of symbolization, rigidity, and alienation that arise from operationalizing "merit" into measurable standards. Building on this foundation, the paper argues that Renwuzhi 人物志, authored by Liu Shao 刘劭 during the Three Kingdoms period in ancient China, offers a profound reservoir of classical wisdom for addressing this dilemma. Through an analysis of Renwuzhi's core framework for talent identification, centered on observing inner qualities via the "Nine Manifestations" (jiuzheng, 九征), verifying reality

through the “Eight Observations” (baguan, 八观), and guarding against bias via the “Seven Errors” (qimiu, 七谬), this study elucidates that the text does not merely provide a rigid set of selection criteria. Instead, it constructs a dynamic methodology for discerning character, aimed at penetrating external “labels” (such as reputation and speech) to perceive intrinsic qualities (disposition and capacity). This classical theoretical resource not only preemptively engages with modern critiques of meritocracy but also, through its deep understanding of the extreme complexity involved in achieving “the correspondence of names and reality” (mingshi xiangfu, 名实相副) and its corresponding institutional designs, provides an enlightening philosophical basis for reflecting upon and reforming contemporary selection practices.

**Erin Hagood (Columbia University)** – *The Education of Liang Fa, China’s First Protestant Minister*

Best known as China’s first Protestant minister and author of the influential religious tract Quanshi Liangyan《勸世良言》which shaped the ideology of the Taiping, Liang Fa remains little known in scholarship of late imperial China. Writing under his pen names, Xueshanzhe 學善者 and Xueshanjushi 學善居士, he authored a variety of articles and tracts on religious and secular topics, including criticisms of Confucianism and Buddhism, explanations of Christian theology and writings on the opium trade. Unlike later converts and allies of Protestant missionaries in China who were largely scholars trained in the Confucian classics, Liang came from a humble background steeped in Buddhist folk culture. When he met the London Missionary Society as a young man in the early 19th century, they were engaged in Ricardian criticisms of the East India Company’s opium monopoly and Crown imperial policy. These early influences would have a large influence on Liang’s religious criticisms of the Qing. This paper will survey Liang’s early writings beginning with his work on the first Chinese language newspaper Chashisu Meiyue Chongji Zhuan《察世俗每月統計傳》to uncover this alternative form of imperial encounter, which nevertheless marks an important chapter in China’s entry into modernity and an early source for later Neo-Christian, Republican, Nationalist and Communist ideology.

**Christina Cho (Peking University)** – *“Magical Medicine” in Medieval China: A Case Study of Nagarjuna’s Treatise on the Five Sciences*

Much is still unknown about Nāgārjuna’s Treatise on the Five Sciences (龍樹五明論) despite it being one of the most detailed writings from medieval China on talismans (符) and seals (印), which were widely employed as therapeutic or apotropaic tools across religions. The only extant copy is in the Taishō Tripitaka, which has led scholars to differ on when the text emerged. It seems likely that portions of the text circulated long before someone compiled them during the Tang (618-907), when Nāgārjuna—the Indian philosopher known in China as one of Buddhism’s most important patriarchs (祖)—became associated with spell-craft (咒術). Indeed, the Treatise is a two-scroll ritual manual containing numerous Sanskrit spells (dhāranīs) transliterated into Chinese. These spells—and the rituals that implement them—promise a variety of outcomes, such as the ability to ward off ghosts, heal illnesses, and even levitate. Most are meant to empower talismans, seals, and other materials, including incense, dirt, ash, human effigies, and five-colored string (五色綖). These objects should then be worn, ingested, held in the mouth, or applied to the body. Though this text’s talismans and seals are clearly indigenous to China, these amuletic practices had long existed in Indic and Sinitic traditions. This paper outlines the internal logics of the text while answering why they might have been effective. The syncretic nature of this manuscript, which echoes—sometimes verbatim—other Buddhist and Daoist sources, provides a glimpse into the highly fluid religious environment in which Buddhists responded to people’s needs.

**Benjamin Birkenstock (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)** – *“Whenever Intelligence is Used, Gather it in with Tranquility (智用則收之以恬)” – Cognition’s Self-reduction in Ji Kang*

This paper will reconstruct the philosophical psychology of Ji Kang (西康, 223–262 CE), and use it to provide a new perspective on cognitive studies of the relationship between deliberate cognitive control and non-reflective, emotional impulses. For Ji, human nature (性 xing) is fundamentally “responsive affect” (應感 yinggan), divided into desire (欲 yu–the valences that stimuli take on when perceived), emotions (情 qing–the impressions desire-objects engender when they are attained or lost), and intelligence (智 zhi–also “foreknowledge,” 前識 qianshi, prediction of future perceptions and of what our ensuing desires and emotions towards them will be). Desire and emotion are thus already a discriminatory processes which only pursue ostensibly satisfactory objects (as Ji says, even the alcoholic's desire is not aroused by wine she knows to be poisoned). Intelligence, on the other hand, often functions to tell our desires and emotional attractions to fixate on specific objects as if they were the long term source of happiness. Once it recognizes this, however, intelligence can also see that internal conflict lies precisely

in this fixation, and lasting happiness lies in tranquility (恬 tian), the higher-order ability to de-couple from desires and emotions, allowing them to arise and pass away again without needing to make any of them endure forever. This paradoxically self-reducing use of deliberative intelligence may provide a helpful resolution to a tension in contemporary cognitive studies, which both suggest that self-control of biased impulses is limited and self-undermining and that self-control techniques and reflective practices can indeed help reduce impulsive biases.

**Helen Bovi (Stanford University)** – *Selfhood, Agency, and Relationality: Zhuangzi and Nietzsche*

This paper investigates how the Zhuangzi's fluid and relational conception of selfhood reshapes understandings of agency, relationality, and ethical responsiveness. By placing the Zhuangzi in dialogue with Nietzsche and Heidegger, it explores how non-fixed, perspectival selves engage meaningfully with others and the world, offering insights into the ethical, social, and ecological dimensions of human action. The discussion is motivated by questions arising from the Zhuangzi's deconstruction of stable traits, values, and identities: if selves are continually transforming, what persists? How is agency exercised without fixed commitments? How can relationships be reconceived in a world of constant change? Heidegger's distinction between calculative and meditative thinking in Discourse on Thinking provides a useful conceptual tool. Calculative thinking predicts and organizes based on given conditions, treating beings instrumentally, while meditative thinking allows for a releasement toward things, enabling engagement with beings as they are. This approach is enriched by a Zhuangzian take on the often misleadingly interpreted and translated notion of de (德), which Chris Fraser defines as a stylistic tendency of attitude and action. This in turn resonates with Nietzsche's emphasis on cultivating an individual style (or "taste") of living that can remain responsive to the transformations of things. If each self is understood as expressing a distinct de, without placing these modes of activity in a hierarchy, how might this shape our relationships with non-human life?

[938] Juan Wu (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS)) and Zhiyue Zhou (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies). *Contesting the Ethno-Nationalist Frame: Joseonjok Diasporic Memory and the Reconfiguration of Contemporary Sinology.*

**Abstract.** This paper argues for the critical necessity of expanding contemporary Chinese Studies (Sinology) beyond Han-centric narratives to include the vital domain of diasporic and dual-identity subjects, using the Korean-Chinese (Joseonjok) community as a central case study. We examine how the transnational narratives of two Joseonjok creators—Zhang Lu's film Dooman River (2011) and Jeon Chun-hwa's novel Yabeoseu (2023)—articulate strategies of memory reconfiguration. These works offer a compelling counterpoint to the powerful ethno-nationalist discourses of homogeneity prevalent in the PRC and South Korea, which often render invisible the collective memories of border subjects. This study deliberately positions the Joseonjok experience within the broader context of East Asian postcolonial migration and minority governance, illuminating how their aesthetic resilience contests the lingering colonial and homogenizing logics embedded in ethno-nationalist frameworks. This is a crucial area for Sinology, as the Joseonjok experience fundamentally challenges the unitary concept of "Chineseness" and the disciplinary borders of Chinese Studies itself. Adopting a transnational memory studies framework, the paper conducts a comparative textual analysis. At the macro level, a discourse analysis reveals how state policies produce systemic exclusion and silence on the Tumen River border. At the micro level, we explore how the creators employ aesthetic strategies to restore marginalized voices. The findings indicate that these works engage in a micro-restoration of diasporic memory—whether through Jeon's transformation of Yabeoseu (unfamiliar food) into a counter-site of memory, or Zhang's slow cinematic poetics foregrounding sensory reality. Ultimately, this study asserts that Sinology must fully integrate these transnational voices to accurately map the cultural and political landscape of modern China and East Asia.

**Keywords:** Joseonjok Diaspora, Border Subject, Memory Politics, Dual Identity, Ethno-nationalism

[939] Shang Dong (Nankai University, China; University of Nottingham, UK). *Exorcising the 'Inner Demon'? Individualisation and Diversified Employment among People with Visual Impairments in China.*

**Abstract.** In China, diversified employment, which means the diversity of options for employment, is an expression of individualisation, representing an attempt by people with visual impairments to deconstruct the occupational stigma of the blind massage and broader capability-related stigma. Drawing on the experiences of eighteen individuals with visual impairments in China, this paper explores how this choice achieves in reality. The study finds diversified employment is driven by state expectations, the pursuit of occupational self-respect, differing physical conditions, and the construction of a meaningful life. Consequently, this process is shaped by state-level legal and policy constraints, resources and support from the third sector, and agency of the individuals themselves. However, the research concludes that while these new occupations alter their lifestyles, people with visual impairments

achieve only limited social participation in mainstream workplaces and continue to face social exclusion.
**Keywords:** Stigma, Blind Massage in China, Self-respect, Diversified Employment, Individualisation

[940] Yunzhu Huang (Sichuan University). *From Dressing Gown to Changshan (长衫): The "Literati-ization" of Sherlock Holmes in Late Qing and Early Republican China.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines the early Chinese translations of the Sherlock Holmes stories and argues that the iconic Victorian gentleman-detective was systematically reshaped into a shi (士)—a culturally legible Chinese literatus figure. Rather than introducing readers to a recognizably foreign social type, late Qing translators such as Yan Dugu (严独鹤) enacted what this paper terms a "gentrifying translation", a strategy that embedded Western elite masculinity within the symbolic repertoire of the Chinese scholar-official tradition. Through close reading of early renditions of Holmes and Watson, the paper demonstrates how translators mobilized established literary tropes—elegant leisure, moral refinement, and the emotive idioms of literati friendship—to recreate Holmes as a hybrid "new literatus."

Critically, they reconfigured the Holmes-Watson dynamic through the zhiyin (知音) paradigm, projecting onto it the idealized soulmate bond of classical pairs like Bo Ya(伯牙) and Zhong Ziqi(钟子期). This gentrifying translation was not merely for accessibility. It constituted a conscious effort by late Qing intellectuals to imagine a new scholarly identity for a hybrid Sino-Western modernity. By domesticating this paragon of Western rationality into a familiar Confucian-style scholar-hero, they negotiated their own identity crisis and aspirations amidst imperial decline and intellectual upheaval, using translation as a tool for cultural self-reinvention.

**Keywords:** Sherlock Holmes, gentrifying translation, literati culture, Western knowledge in China, intellectual history

[942] Dian Li (Uni Trier), Tim Dressler (Uni Trier) and Gefei Wang (Uni Hunan). *Creative Interpretation: Song Confucianism in Dialogue with Tradition.*

**Abstract.** This panel investigates the sophisticated strategies of creative reinterpretation employed by Song Confucian scholars to negotiate between classical ideals and the pressing demands of their time. Through three case studies, ranging from historical critiques of Han and Tang governance, reconceptualizations of fate against divinatory practices to the appropriation of Buddhist and Daoist rituals, this panel illuminates how Song scholars engaged in a critical dialogue with their immediate past and competing traditions. By redefining foundational concepts such as ming 命 versus tianming 天命 and the boundaries of orthodox ritual, they did not merely reinforce the Confucian intellectual system. Instead, they forged a distinctive Song identity, transforming inherited traditions into a source of innovation for political, cosmological, and social thought as well. This panel ultimately reveals how this intellectual dynamism enabled the formation of a new, resilient synthesis that characterized the Song Confucian revival.

**Keywords:** Song Confucianism, Political Philosophy, Ritual Studies

**Dian Li (Trier University)** – *Reinterpreting Fate: Song Confucian Responses to Divinatory Practices*

The close association between the Song court and practitioners of divination (zhanbu 占卜) permeated society at large, shaping literati culture and prompting some scholars to shift Confucian moral cultivation to divinatory techniques. This study centers on the following question: how did Confucian scholars reconcile their moral ideal of "accepting haven's decree and acquiescing to one's fate" with divinatory practices that aimed at "divining and altering fate"? Drawing upon correspondence between Southern Song literati and divinatory practitioners, this study reveals how scholar-officials integrated divinatory theories and practices into the Confucian cosmological framework by reinterpreting the concepts of "fate" (ming 命) and "heaven's decree" (tianming 天命). They regarded the divination as a preliminary inquiry into superficial fortunes, while treating self-cultivation as the foundational way of comprehending the deeper heaven's decree. By redefining "knowing fate" (zhiming 知命) as a form of moral self-understanding rather than the prediction of the future, Confucianism transcended the realm of divination. This intellectual strategy not only provided literati a conceptual approach to ease worldly concerns but also effectively mitigated the challenge that the perceived efficacy of divitation posed to the Confucian moral order.

**Tim Dressler (Trier University)** – *Government officials caught between Buddhism, Daoism and Neo-Confucianism: Ritual politics in the Song Dynasty*

As scholar officials various Song dynasty Confucians regularly attended and organized elaborate rituals. Consequently, many rain incantations (qiu yu ji 求雨祭) by Ouyang Xiu and Zhu Xi have been transmitted. In another context, Han Yu ordered the dangerous crocodiles to leave the people in peace. This often created a dilemma for the Confucian officials. On the one hand, they were asked by the populace to organize events that often had

Buddhist or Daoist connotations. For example, the “Green prayers” (qing ci 青詞) of Daoist origin, became increasingly popular literary texts during the Northern Song. On the other hand, the Neo-Confucians attempted to fight back the Buddhist and Daoist influence, without alienating their people. In this presentation I would like to trace the Song masters different attitudes and ways of dealing with these conflicting demands.

[947] Julien Baley (SOAS, University of London), Jīnqí Yīng (Trinity College Dublin), Ruìfēng Qiū (Fudan University) and Hǎihuá Xiāo (Chinese University of Hong Kong). *Sound Change and Variation in Old Chinese: Excavated Evidence and Quantitative Approaches.*

**Abstract.** This panel investigates how fine-grained variation in early Chinese sources can be turned into evidence for sound change and morpho-phonological structure in Old Chinese. It brings together work in historical phonology, morphosyntax, paleography and quantitative corpus analysis to ask how segment inventories and word-formation patterns can be constrained by transmitted and excavated materials.

A first strand of the panel takes connected-speech phenomena and spelling variation as data in their own right. Epenthesis and elision in fixed binomes, personal names and other collocations in bronze inscriptions and bamboo slips are used to trace assimilation and simplification processes, and to show how phonetic misperception can trigger reanalysis of onsets and codas and reshape etymologies.

Another strand examines graphemic variants in calendrical terminology, where securely dated excavated spellings allow complex onset–coda clusters and changes such as *-r > -j/-n to be located in space and time. A third line of inquiry focuses on personal pronouns, arguing that vowel reduction in possessive position and subsequent functional expansion can explain the proliferation and restructuring of first- and second-person forms.

A further dimension is provided by graph-based rhyme networks and statistical tests applied to Warring States and Han rhyme corpora, used to reassess controversial coda categories such as *-r and to evaluate competing reconstruction systems.

Taken together, the papers argue for a model of Old Chinese in which local variation—across registers, genres, regions and writing practices—is not noise to be filtered out, but a crucial source of evidence for reconstructing segmental contrasts, cluster behaviour and morpho-phonological change.

**Keywords:** Old Chinese, Historical phonology, Morphosyntax, Excavated manuscripts, Quantitative corpus methods

**Haihua Xiao (Chinese University of Hong Kong)** – *Possessive and Reduction: A New Theory on the Origin of the Personal Pronouns 台 *lə, 而 *nə, and 吾 *ŋˤa*

Old Chinese features a notably rich inventory of personal pronouns, yet the origins and functional distinctions among them remain insufficiently understood. Drawing on both received texts and excavated materials, this paper proposes a unified account of how several pronouns arose through vowel reduction in possessive position. Because possessive pronouns occupy a marginal position in both syllable structure and semantic function, they are particularly prone to phonological weakening. Forms created in this environment may then become frequent, develop into independent words, extend into non-possessive uses, and eventually establish new distinctions within the pronominal system. This mechanism is clearly reflected in pronouns that emerge during the Spring and Autumn period. The first-person form 台 *lə, used exclusively in the possessive, derives from reduced variant of 余 *la and records its new function in the Eastern Zhou. The second-person pronoun 而 *nə also appears first as a possessive, and frequently co-occurs with 汝 *naʔ, which it derives from. The first-person pronoun *吾 ŋˤa follows the same pattern: initially a possessive variant of 我 *ŋˤaiʔ, later extended to the nominative and developed a new distinction from 我 *ŋˤaiʔ. In addition, *乃 nˤəʔ may likewise be an earlier reduced possessive form of 汝 *naʔ, already present before the Shang and lost as case distinctions declined. Considering 台 *lə, 而 *nə, and 吾 *ŋˤa together allows for a coherent explanation of pronominal proliferation in this period and offers a fresh perspective on morpho-phonological change in Old Chinese.

**Ruifeng Qiu (Fudan University)** – *Examples of Epenthesis and Elision in Old Chinese*

Excavated and transmitted texts often show spelling variants for the same word. This paper argues that some of these variations reflect epenthesis (phonological segment insertion) and elision (segment deletion) in Old Chinese. Focusing on fixed syntactic contexts—including binomes, proper names, and passages from classical texts—we identify two primary mechanisms: (1) epenthesis driven by articulatory assimilation (e.g., velar stop insertion in jìliáo 寂寥 *dziûk-riûk > 肅覺 *dziûk-kriûk ‘silent and void’, where the coda *-k triggers reinterpretation of the second syllable’s initial *r- as *kr-); and (2) elision resulting from syllable-boundary simplification (e.g., Zhězhǐyú 者旨於 *ta-ki-ʔa > *ta-ki-a > 鄧與 *tak-ja ‘personal name’, with initial *ʔ- loss and syllable reanalysis). These processes are concentrated in fixed syllable combinations, leading to characteristic spelling variants. Notably, scribal practices

in bronze inscriptions and bamboo slips preserve connected-speech effects that were often regularized in later received texts. Methodologically, this paper reconstructs pre-change forms by examining connected-speech sound changes. This approach clarifies opaque etymologies and highlights the spoken-language dynamics of Old Chinese. The findings show how phonetic perception shaped certain spellings. By analyzing epenthesis and elision, we can recover earlier phonetic forms and, together with the evidence of word families, reconstruct word-formation processes more accurately. This ultimately helps to integrate historical phonology and morphology into a coherent framework for analyzing connected-speech effects in Old Chinese.

**Jinqi Ying (Trinity College Dublin)** – *Excavated Spelling Variants and Historical Phonology: The Case of 涒灘 MC thwon-than 'calendrical term for ninth Earthly Branch in the Jupiter cycle' in Early Chinese Sources*

This paper examines how spelling variants of a Chinese calendrical term contribute to historical phonology. The ninth Earthly Branch appears in the Jupiter cycle as 涒灘 MC thwon-than in received texts like the Ěryǎ 爾雅 and Lǚshì Chūnqiū 呂氏春秋, yielding a default OC reconstruction *[tʰ]ˁu[n]-[tʰ]ˁa[n]. Excavated manuscripts offer further variation, including □衰欠鬱 *Tsuj-Na[r] (□化卩 夫人□女囂鼎 Wéi Fūrén Xiāo dǐng), 滖難 *Tsuj-Na[r] (Tsinghua manuscript), 芮漢 *Nuj-Na[r] (Mǎwàngduī manuscript), and 涒歎 *Tu[n]-Ta[n] (Lǐqì bēi 禮器碑). These variants suggest an earlier form *[Ts]ˁu[j]-ŋ̥ˁar, where [Ts]- may represent s(r)- vel sim. Secure archaeological contexts allow these variants to serve as chronological and regional markers of sound change. The sound changes evidenced include: (1) onset assimilation *[Ts]- > *ŋ̥-; (2) *(-ps >) *-ts > *-js (both attested c. 168 BCE, Húnán); (3) *ŋ̥- > *tʰ-; and (4) *Kl- > *T- (both attested 156 CE, Shāndōng). If no anticipatory assimilation occurred in the first syllable, viz., the earlier form was *[Ts]ˁur-ŋ̥ˁar, then we should posit (5) *-r > *-j (c. 507 BCE, present-day Hénán; c. 275–335 BCE, Warring States Chu). Otherwise, an additional stage is required before *ŋ̥- > *tʰ-: (6) *-j > *-n in the first syllable. This case study highlights how graphemic variation in excavated texts helps trace Old Chinese sound change and underscores the importance of integrating phonological reconstruction, manuscript evidence, and archaeological data in East Asian historical linguistics.

**Julien Baley (SOAS)** – *Does Old Chinese -r Exist? A Statistical Re-evaluation of Warring States and Han Rhyme Evidence*

Since Karlgren (1957) and Starostin (1989), who recast Karlgren's acute codas as a three-way contrast including *-r, Old Chinese rhyme groups 文 and 微 and related "yin–yang transposition" patterns have often been interpreted as evidence for an additional acute coda, traditionally reconstructed as *-r and incorporated into Baxter & Sagart's (2014) four-way system *-j, *-t, *-n, *-r. Their account is now central in OC reconstruction, but its empirical basis has been contested. Wang Hongzhi 王弘治 (2019) re-examines Han-time rhyming, Indic–Chinese transcriptions and excavated texts and concludes that none provides positive support for *-r. Ho Dah-an 何大安 (2016) and Xiang Xiaolu 向筱路 (2025) further question the probative value of early transcriptional evidence and the status of *-r as a necessary rather than merely possible coda category. This paper proposes a new assessment of *-r using a quantitatively explicit treatment of Warring States and Han rhyming material. Building on earlier work that models rhyme behaviour statistically (Baley 2022, 2025, forthcoming), I will (i) construct rhyme networks for characters assigned *-r in Baxter–Sagart and their *-n/zero-coda counterparts, (ii) estimate the degree of rhyme exclusivity vs overlap across genres and time periods, and (iii) test whether the observed patterns are more compatible with a distinct *-r category or with analyses that dispense with *-r altogether. The results are intended to clarify how strongly the transmitted and excavated rhyme corpora constrain the reconstruction of OC codas, and to place the *-r debate on a more explicitly probabilistic footing.

[948] Tabea Thöle (Hamburg University). *Beyond Tradition: Reassessing the Genre of Jiaxun 家訓 in Song China.*

**Abstract.** The genre of Jiaxun (家訓), commonly translated as "family instructions", is often portrayed in modern scholarship as part of a long-standing, conventionally Confucian tradition. Secondary literature frequently attributes to these texts a continuity and normative authority extending across centuries, with works such as the Family Instructions of the Yan Clan (Yanshi jiaxun 顏氏家訓) cited as early evidence of a coherent and timeless genre. Closer examination shows, however, that Jiaxun can be identified as a distinct and stable genre only from the Song period (960–1279) onward. This is evident not only from the growing corpus of Jiaxun produced during the Song era, but also from their systematic classification in Song bibliographic catalogues, where they appear as a clearly identifiable textual category. This presentation investigates which genre-defining features can be reconstructed from Song-period Jiaxun and how these elements shape a historically specific understanding of the genre. Particular attention is paid to thematic and functional characteristics that distinguish Song texts, including their responses to concrete social, political, and moral challenges. Rather than representing an already established, long-standing tradition, many Jiaxun articulate individual perspectives shaped by contemporary concerns, revealing the contingent and evolving nature of the genre. Drawing on selected Song-period primary sources and relevant

modern scholarship, the presentation highlights the processes through which Jiaxun emerged as a recognizable genre and delineates the criteria that defined their content and purpose in the Song period. In doing so, it reassesses the historical formation of the genre and challenges the tendency to treat Jiaxun solely as carriers of an enduring Confucian "tradition."
**Keywords:** Song-period formation of the Jiaxun genre, Reevaluation of "Jiaxun tradition", Genre-defining features of Song-period Jiaxun

[949] Sofia Graziani (University of Trento). *Towards the Asia-Australian Trade Union Conference: China's trade unionists and transnational networks in the aftermath of WWII, 1945-1949.*
**Abstract.** During the Cold War, socialist-leaning international organizations functioned as key hubs in a heterogeneous, global, and anti-colonial transnational network. They offered privileged spaces for diverse non-state actors—across blocs and from the "Third World"—to articulate their positions and advance their agendas, despite general alignment with the Soviet stance (e.g. Pešta 2024). Chinese trade unions joined such bodies, contributing to these networks while bringing their own perspectives and domestic debates with them.
This paper examines China's engagement with the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in the aftermath of WWII, a topic largely overlooked compared to other organizations such as the World Peace Council or the Women's International Democratic Federation. It reconstructs the process through which the newly founded PRC became central in conducting Asian trade unionism and expanding the WFTU's influence in the region, as exemplified by the 1949 Asia-Australasian Trade Union Conference in Beijing, and highlights the role of key figures in China's labor movement, who represented Chinese trade unions internationally, in drawing global attention to China and conducting diplomacy on behalf of the CCP from an early stage. By linking trade union diplomacy to wider domestic and international developments, the paper shows how the ACFTU/PRC eventually became the WFTU's main focus in Asia. Tracing early contacts and treating Chinese trade unions as historical actors in their own right allow for recontextualizing labor diplomacy as a significant axis of the CCP (and later PRC) international activism and reassessing China's role in postwar international processes.
**Keywords:** China, Trade Unions, Labour movement, World Federation of Trade Unions, Liu Ningyi, Transnational networks, Cold War

[954] Wushi Lin (Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts / UGent). *Subjectless Moral Agent: Zibo Zhenke's Interpretation of "Non-self" in Response to Yangmingist Ethical Critique.*
**Abstract.** The ethical critique of Buddhism is a central issue shaping Confucian–Buddhist dialogue. Wang Yangming (王陽明 1472–1528), for instance, grounding sagehood in selflessness (wuwo 無我), criticized Chan (禪) for its selfishness and overemphasis on personal transcendence, which undermined engagement with the secular world. A critical tension also exists within Buddhism: if the doctrines of emptiness (śūnyatā) and non-self (anātman) deny any enduring entity, how is altruistic action possible? This paper argues that late-Ming Buddhist reinterpretations of "non-self" were a response to these challenges, and that Zibo Zhenke (紫柏真可, 1543–1604), who maintained close ties with Yangmingist literati, played a pivotal role.
Zibo's resolution was achieved by positing enduring Buddha-nature as the moral agency and interpreting the "self" (ātman) not as a permanent entity but as the reflexive self-awareness generated by the cognitive subject-object dichotomy. Specifically, enlightened one realizes the non-duality between self and others, thus perceiving everything as oneself. This not only allowed Zibo to affirm an enduring agent for ethical commitment and "non-self" a practical meaning, but echoes Yangmingist idea of the "unity of myriad things".
Zibo's approach fundamentally differs from the Indian context, where anātman serves as a doctrinal wedge issue distinguishing Buddhism from rivals. Instead, Zibo treats "non-self" as a shared method and goal of cultivation across Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, being.
This study may contribute to understanding the creative development of tathāgatagarbha and anātman doctrines in China and Confucian–Buddhist intellectual interaction.
**Keywords:** Non-self, Zibo Zhenke, subject-object dichotomy, late-Ming Buddhism, Confucian–Buddhist interaction

[956] Liangliang Chen (The University of Hong Kong). *Between Performers and Literati: The Blurred Social Status of Drama Teacher from the late-Ming to mid- Qing China.*
**Abstract.** Drama teachers (梨園教師, Liyuan jiaoshi), also known as music teachers (曲師, qushi), were individuals who earn their livelihood through teaching Kunqu music and performance. Modern scholarship often conflates drama teachers with actors and collectively views them as belonging to a lower social standing. However, whether

considering their backgrounds, knowledge structures, or self-perceptions, the social status of drama teacher was far from clear-cut, reflecting a more complex reality.
This paper focuses on a dozen musical scores, along with other historical records, to trace the development of the drama teacher profession and examine their social status
from the late Ming to the mid-Qing period. These scores have not yet fully utilized so far, largely due to uncertainties surrounding their authorship. My preliminary research confirms that at least nine of these scores were compiled by court drama teachers during the Qing dynasty, involving over twenty individuals. These scores, often accompanied by detailed prefaces rich in information, reveal that many of these teachers were not merely specialists in music and performance but also possessed a high level of education in elite literary and cultural knowledge. Some shared common values and discourses with the literati class. This paper aims to reconstruct the lives of these authors and explore their artistic philosophies and professional identities. In doing so, it not only enriches our understanding of theatrical culture in late imperial China but also offers new insights into social stratification and mobility during this period.
**Keywords:** Performing art, theatrical culture, social stratification and mobility, late imperial China

[960] Paula Engelbach (Heidelberg University (MA student)). *Menstruating bodies in religious discourses: The Blood Bowl Hell and „Blood Bowl Thought“ .*

**Abstract.** The “Blood Bowl Sutra” Xuepenjing 血盆經 has become a rather popular topic in gender focused research in recent years, not least because it serves as a sort of shocking example of discrimination against women in imperial China (and Japan), with its vivid descriptions of a blood-filled hell where only women are punished after death for the pollution of earth and water caused by their bleeding during menstruation and childbirth. With an interest in the discursive handling of the very physically, but often less discursively present phenomenon of menstruation at the center, I want to look at the religious discourses surrounding the so-called "Blood Hell" narratives in Qing China, when cults that centered around the concept were widespread, as one example of a late imperial menstruation discourse. Which aspects about menstruation are particularly emphasized? In what context is the physical process placed, and what kind of significance is attributed to it? How does this connect to the construction of a concept like "woman"? Drawing on my analysis of selected religious texts and information on related rituals, I consider menstruation as an object of study for the relationship between body and sex/gender, and furthermore, explore in what ways power might be exerted through this interplay. I find that the discourse of Blood hell narratives a) strengthens the imperative of maternity for people who shed uterine blood precisely through generating paradoxical expectations and b) expresses anxieties of people that are unable to bear children.
**Keywords:** menstruation, gendered bodies, religious discourses, Hell of the Blood Pond/Bowl

[965] Stefanie Elbern (China-Schul-Akademie, Universität Heidelberg), Odila Schröder (China-Schul-Akademie, Universität Heidelberg), Jonas Schmid (China-Schul-Akademie, Universität Heidelberg) and Marjolijn Kaiser (China-Schul-Akademie, Universität Heidelberg). *Keys to China? Rethinking Epistemic Frames in German High School Education: A Transcultural Perspective.*

**Abstract.** A preliminary 2018 survey suggests that China plays only a marginal role in the education of Germany’s roughly 11 million high school students—an observation that contrasts markedly with the goals of Germany’s 2023 “China Strategy,” which points to the need for “well-founded, up-to-date, and independent expertise on China.” How prominently does China feature in German school curricula and textbooks today? And what could be building blocks for educating a new generation of students for whom China (and other distant cultures) remain no longer obscure, but become part of a “new normal”?
This panel presents the results of a comprehensive study surveying the entirety of Germany’s current high school curricula for history, geography/politics/social studies, and religion/ethics as well as a corpus of some 1,500 recent high school textbooks (2013–23). It reveals that China (here understood as the sinophone world) appears more often than expected. Yet, what are the epistemic frames determining a student’s understanding of China today? Which voices can be heard? Do textbooks offer enough context and different Chinese perspectives, or do they serve specific master narratives? Identifying key sources, and ways of framing them, the papers illustrate how high school education can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of China and the world—so as to illuminate rather than obscure. For these insights to inform future curricular and textbook development, China scholars should take on the responsibility of facilitating this knowledge transformation.
**Keywords:** Educational Media, Education, Transculturality

**Odila Schröder (China-Schul-Akademie, Heidelberg University)** – *The Same Old Story: China in German Geography Textbooks—Master Narratives, Obscured Complexities, and Imaginary Voices*

Drawing on an analysis of German high school geography curricula and textbooks, this paper examines how much of China can be found in these educational discourses, and more importantly, which China is being portrayed. Geography curricula implicitly define "China" as the natural and cultural space within the borders of the People's Republic of China (PRC), while other Sinophone regions—including Taiwan and Hong Kong—receive considerably less attention. At the same time, textbooks focus on a narrow set of topics that in turn reinforces specific master narratives, typically emphasizing the (active) role of the Chinese Communist Party. Without critical engagement, such materials risk perpetuating problematic perspectives and stereotypes. Taking China's One-Child-Policy as an example, the paper discusses the pitfalls of (necessary) didactic reductionism: lack of context makes it impossible for students to adequately interpret the information provided (e.g., statistical data), or to form their own data-supported views about a topic at hand. The use of fictionalized "authentic" voices creates the impression of a homogeneous China that does little to reflect the country's multifaceted and complex realities.

What kinds of keys can be employed and how should they be framed to facilitate a more nuanced—and at times necessarily controversial—portrayal of China? Drawing on current sinological research, this paper suggests several practical solutions to these questions highlighting once more the importance of sinological engagement in this field of knowledge production.

**Jonas Schmid (China-Schul-Akademie, Heidelberg University)** – *Illuminating Chinese Histories? (Un)heard Voices in History Textbooks*

This paper draws on a comprehensive review of all German history textbooks published between 2013 and 2023 (over 1,000 pages referring to China). It examines which key texts are quoted to teach Chinese history to German students, showing that Chinese voices remain in the minority. And when they do appear, they primarily reflect political perspectives from the top of the social hierarchy. The absence of texts that convey a more diverse picture of Chinese histories points to the specific interpretive framework through which China is read by German students. Comparing German and sinophone history textbooks, this paper will consider two case studies that are mentioned very frequently in German history textbooks: Zheng He (14–15th century) and Lin Zexu (18th century). Why are different key texts chosen to explain their role to students? Which texts are considered key to illuminate these parts of Chinese history, in which contexts and why? The paper argues that in each case, the texts chosen as keys function as sites where collective memory, political rhetoric, and historiographical traditions intersect. It illustrates how specific choices in educational canons—German or sinophone—illuminate or obscure specific aspects of "China." Taking high school history textbooks as a particularly formative genre, the paper reveals how key texts may serve to determine frames of knowledge, authority, and imagination transmitted in educational discourses of different areas.

**Stefanie Elbern (China-Schul-Akademie, Heidelberg University)** – *Transcultural Encounters with China: Uncovering New Potentials in Religious and Ethics Education*

Recognizing cultural variety and fostering ambiguity tolerance are key educational goals, particularly in German religious and ethics education. Although religious life in and ethical concepts from China could be highly relevant in this context—especially given the constraints and reinterpretations shaped by different political environments in the sinophone world—China receives little explicit attention in recent German school curricula and textbooks for these fields. Based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis, this paper identifies several areas where China could be productively integrated in order to support the educational aims of religious and ethics teaching: curricular topics such as the role of religion in society and the relationship between religion and the state; i.e. religion and politics, including the question of religious institutions in authoritarian systems; and manifestations, characteristics, and definitions of terms such as religion, philosophy, and worldview; as well as the question of conflicts of conscience and dissent offer themselves to be explored with regard to China. The paper will offer suggestions for alternative and inclusive approaches, illuminating China's religion and ethics as one example for transculturally informed teaching.

**Marjolijn Kaiser (China-Schul-Akademie, Heidelberg University)** – *Seeing China to Know the World: Chinese Literature in Transcultural Education*

Theoretical frameworks and goals for the development of "intercultural" skills are well established in high school curricula. Yet, the concept of transculturality, which highlights not borders between but the dynamic developments of cultures and thus trains self-reflexivity and awareness, is less commonly known—and even less practiced—in German secondary education, however. Taking literary education as an example, this paper explores how including key texts from the Chinese literary canon, can contribute to transcultural learning. The paper follows Werner

Winterstein (2006), who proposes that transcultural literary education does not simply imply adding more or "other" texts to the curricula. Instead, he calls for a rethinking of structural elements like "the canon" or "world literature" itself. He also shifts the focus to authors and texts that embody the "in-between" that is so essential to transculturality. Taking China as an example, this paper argues that for transcultural education to be truly effective, and to provide students with the skillset necessary to face future global challenges, "non-Western" narratives (Chinese being only one example) need to be incorporated. The paper will present several sinophone literary key texts as examples on how to do just that.

[966] Zhengmeng Zhang (Peking University). *Cognitive Reconfiguration and Self-Transformation in Late Qing Diplomatic Diaries.*

**Abstract.** The diaries of late Qing envoys to the West stand as invaluable records of the intellectual explorations and identity struggles of the Chinese elite as they were thrust into the global system. This study examines the diaries of figures such as Guo Songtao（郭嵩焘）, Zhang Deyi（张德彝）, and Xue Fucheng（薛福成）, framing them not merely as personal accounts but as dynamic sites of "knowledge production" and "contact zones" between civilizations. It aims to analyze how these envoys interpreted and articulated their encounter with an unfamiliar, modern world. Through a close reading of these texts, this research traces the complex trajectory of the envoys' intellectual transformation. The first stage was marked by profound sensory and cognitive shock. The urban landscapes of the West induced a deep state of "cognitive dissonance," shattering their "Celestial Empire" worldview, with their diaries filled with traces of astonishment, confusion, and adjustment. This was followed by a phase of systematic observation and internalization. Acting as cultural translators, they meticulously documented modern institutions such as parliaments, factories, and international law. In this process, they inadvertently initiated a critical reflection on their own civilization. Finally, upon their return, their narratives entered public discourse. They transformed their overseas experiences into blueprints for reform or defenses of conservatism, their texts thereby becoming significant cultural resources in the late Qing ideological landscape.

This journey was far from a linear progression towards enlightenment; it was a process fraught with hesitation, paradox, and internal tension. This study contends that these diplomatic diaries are crucial texts for understanding how late Qing scholars struggled to reconfigure their worldview amidst a global redistribution of power, and how they began, however tentatively, to cultivate a "modern world consciousness."

**Keywords:** Late Qing Diplomatic Diaries, Cognitive Transformation, Identity Negotiation, Modern World Consciousness, Sino-Western Exchange

[967] Andrea Bréard (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg), Michela Bussotti (EFEO (École française d'Extrême-Orient)) and Uluğ Kuzuoğlu (Washington University in St. Louis). *Scientific Dreams and Technical Limits: The Structure of 字 Beyond Language.*

**Abstract.** The mysteries and cultural promises of a sinograph have inspired printers, lexicographers, logicians, and computer scientists, who have variously devised novel schemes of organizing and encoding it. This panel explores such schemes from the sixteenth to the twentieth century through a scientific and technological lens. We specifically propose to examine the structure of zi 字 to be a series of fixed sets of lines organized in a two-dimensional map, like a puzzle, but with no interconnection between its pieces. Experimenting and playing with this structure have historically yielded an almost indefinite number of possibilities for organizing characters, and even though most of them have disappeared into archives, they still remain as significant markers of the creators' epistemological underpinnings and technical limitations in specific historical contexts.

In this panel we will analyze different projects by pre-modern and modern actors who worked under the technological constraints of their times and considered sinographs from a structural point of view, often leaving linguistic and phonetic considerations aside. These approaches reveal a different essence of Chinese writing that materializes at the intersection of scientific dreams and technical practices.

**Keywords:** History of the sinograph, lexicography, Sino-European dictionaries, Giovanni Vacca, Chu Bong-Foo

**Andrea Bréard (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg)** – *字 and the Search for a Logical Structure*

Originally Leibniz' idea, Giuseppe Peano (1858-1932) was convinced he had solved the theoretical issues for a universal language scheme based on Latin, but the practical questions how to spread its use remained an unresolved obstacle to its universal acceptance in his eyes. Giovanni Vacca (1872-1953), inspired by Peano's and Leibniz' mathematical and logical interests in the sinograph, took Chinese writing seriously into account in thinking about universal language schemes. Yet, altogether, the archives reveal that Vacca did not consider 字 as composed

of images of philosophical ideas as Leibniz did. Vacca's vision of 字 is combinatorial, too, but not in Leibniz' sense. Although he seemed to have a certain sympathy for Leibniz' ideas, he mainly regarded 字 as combinations of sub-graphs, arranged spatially according to a limited set of layouts. In this paper, I analyze Vacca's mechanical schemes of encoding the sinograph for telegraphy, the blind, the typewriter, and in printing.
Using both, Vacca's own manuscripts as well as annotated items from his personal library that relate to structural aspects of the sinograph, I situate his schemes within the larger context of Vacca's vast network of mathematicians, logicians, and sinologists.

**Michela Bussotti (EFEO)** – *Lists, Tables, Supplements: Organization of Characters in Sino-European Dictionaries (17th – early 19th cent.)*
Sino-European dictionaries produced since the end of the sixteenth century often include supplements such as glossaries, lists, or tables of characters organized according to different criteria. These supplements sometimes result from shared practices and sometimes reflect individual choices. This presentation explores their characteristics, similarities, and differences, as well as the continuities and discontinuities evident in the manuscript corpus compiled for the ChEDiL project (https://chedil.hypotheses.org/), with particular attention to reflecting on their presentation and evolution when manuscript compilations gave way to printed dictionaries.

**Uluğ Kuzuoğlu (Washington University in St. Louis)** – *Computing Cosmic Intelligence: Chinese Characters in the (Early) Age of AI*
If computers were built on Chinese characters rather than alphanumerical symbols, could there have been an alternative to artificial intelligence? During the last two decades of the twentieth century, the possibility of creating an artificial intelligence that could understand Chinese characters without the mediation of alphanumerical symbols occupied the minds of scientists, engineers, and technomystics in China and Taiwan. This paper examines one such figure, the Taiwanese computer pioneer Chu Bong-foo, who believed that he could use his own invention, the Cang Jie Input Method, to engineer an artificial intelligence that solely operated via Chinese characters. Blending the technological promises of the 1980s with the global circulation of neo-Orientalist discourses and cybernetic readings of Chinese classics, Chu argued that Chinese characters were to the twenty-first century what oil was to the twentieth—an economic resource beyond imagination. Using Chu's Cang Jie Input Method as a kaleidoscope, this paper explores how the late-twentiethcentury search for artificial intelligence reified civilizational boundaries between East and West by turning the Chinese characters—previously a symbol of civilizational decay—into a technology that could supposedly surpass the Western, i.e., alphanumerical, civilization.

[974] Xuerui Hu (University College London), Mingxuan Li (University of Oxford), Yuet Yan Katherine Wong (University of Oxford) and Zezheng Yu (University of Padova and Ca' Foscari University of Venice). *Care Across Lives and Borders: Negotiating Family, Belonging, and Care in Contemporary China.*

**Abstract.** As the state reconfigures its welfare responsibilities and market forces penetrate deeper into everyday life, recent scholarship has identified "crises of care" (Hans 2023) in which care becomes a site of intense negotiation, moral conflict, and social transformation in China today. This panel extends this line of inquiry by exploring care as both an analytic lens and an ethnographic object to illuminate how ordinary Chinese people improve their lives and those of their families through everyday care practices that "ripple outwards" (Hsu 2025), transgressing the public–private divide. Bringing together studies on lesbian motherhood, live-alone elders, transnational childcare, and prenatal healthcare, the panel examines how care is mobilised, negotiated, and reimagined across kinship, migration, and biopolitics. Both addressing motherhood, Mingxuan Li's paper reveals how women's encounters with medical institutions reproduce gendered caregiving norms even as they adapt to – or resist – them, while Xuerui Hu's research among lesbian mothers shows how care becomes the very ground of resistance as intimate practices generate informal networks and everyday politics amid insufficient state support. The multiplicity of relations underpinning care also emerges in Katherine Wong's paper, which illustrates how live-alone elders reconstitute family ties through the shared work of homemaking. Zezheng Yu's study of Chinese migrant families in Italy highlights how such care networks cross national boundaries, foregrounding children's experiences and the complex negotiations entailed in transnational family care arrangements. Together, these ethnographies invite reflection on the ethical, collective, and transformative potentials of care in shaping contemporary Chinese lives.

**Keywords:** Care and Caregiving, Kinship and Family, Migration and Transnationalism, Queer, Reproduction, Aging

**Mingxuan Li (Oxford University)** – *As Pregnancy, So Patienthood: Women's Experiences of Prenatal Care in China*
Pregnancy in China carries significant social meaning and is a highly medicalized process. Prenatal checkups have become increasingly standardized, often obligatory, as they can affect the newborn's hukou registration. Consequently, prenatal examinations are central to women's pregnancy experiences, with clinical encounters strongly shaping how pregnancy unfolds. Yet existing research, largely medical or quantitative, frequently overlooks women's perspectives and lived experiences. Drawing on interviews with 51 pregnant women and new mothers aged 20–40, alongside clinical observations at three public hospitals in Baoding, China, this study examines how women navigate institutionalized prenatal care within the rhythms of everyday life, and how institutional infrastructures shape health and care surrounding pregnancy. Beginning with an examination of a common hospital regulation -"no men allowed inside"- which typically excludes husbands and male relatives from consultation rooms, the study considers how care is negotiated among doctors, women, and their partners within this clinical space. Focusing on experiences of consultation and ultrasound examination, this paper shows how medicalized and standardized practices intensify the burden of care placed on pregnant women, positioning them as subjects of surveillance rather than recipients of care. By tracing how hospital policies shape participation in prenatal care, the study provides nuanced insights into how institutional norms operate as biopolitical mechanisms that reinforce gendered divisions of caregiving. It highlights how women internalize, adapt to, and at times resist these institutional moralities, deepening our understanding of the intersections between reproduction, gendered care, and state power in contemporary China.

**Xuerui Hu (University College London)** – *Reproductive Community Care: Queer Women's Sharing Reproductive Pathways to Motherhood in Mainland China*
Research on queer reproduction has shown how queer women navigate assisted reproduction and motherhood in heteronormative contexts. Less attention, however, has been paid to the community-based practices through which they collectively make reproductive access possible when formal institutions fail to recognise them as legitimate reproductive subjects. This article addresses this gap by theorising reproductive community care: the situational, dispersed and ambivalent practices through which queer women sustain one another under heteronormative reproductive governance. Drawing on 30 in-depth interviews with queer women in mainland China, the article shows how reproductive community care operates across three domains. First, queer women support one another in accessing reproductive resources by sharing clinic information, procedure experiences, cost breakdowns, donor channels and risk-avoidance strategies. Second, they circulate strategies for managing legal uncertainty through notarisation that seek to secure the relationship between both mothers and children. Third, they create child-centred spaces of belonging in which lesbian motherhood and children with two mothers can become more visible, ordinary and shared. By bringing the concept of community care, more often discussed in relation to racialised communities, into queer reproduction studies, the article contributes to queer reproduction by foregrounding queer women's agency in mainland China under conditions of institutional neglect and misrecognition.

**Yuet Yan Katherine Wong (Oxford University)** – *"Self-Reliance" as a Relational Ethics: Everyday Practices of Homemaking among Live-alone Elders in Urban Hangzhou*
This paper examines the lived experiences of elders living alone in urban Hangzhou, for whom self reliance has become a key ethical foundation of ageing and care. Existing research has tended to adopt a crisis oriented perspective, portraying live alone elders as victims, thereby overlooking their active roles in shaping family relations while reproducing a monolithic view of social change. Drawing on ethnographic research, the paper explores how elders enact self reliance through their residential choices and everyday practices of homemaking with family members, non kin, and digital technologies. It attends to elders' own understandings of the moral significance of self reliance and argues that it is not only a moral obligation imposed by the state and younger generations, but also as a means of reclaiming morality, agency, and care. By situating these homemaking practices within the framework of the home collective, the paper conceptualises living alone as a collective practice that, rather than hindering social connectedness, opens up spaces for negotiating new forms of relationality and care. In doing so, it repositions self reliance as a form of relational ethics, offering a renewed understanding of the ethical dimensions of living alone. Attending to elders' lived experiences, this study addresses an empirical gap in scholarship on individualisation in China, which has remained largely youth focused. Theoretically, it contributes to debates on individualisation and ageing in urban China by highlighting the reconstitution and persistence of family ties amid broader socio cultural transformation.

**Zezheng Yu (University of Padova and Ca' Foscari University of Venice)** – *"Left-behind" in China, "left-alone" in Italy: transnational care arrangements among children of Chinese migrants in Prato*

This paper examines how overseas Chinese families in Italy negotiate childcare through multi-level care arrangements, developing sophisticated strategies that respond to economic necessities, educational considerations, and emotional bonds across borders.

Through long-term ethnographic research in Prato coupled with a child-centred approach, this paper traces children's transitions from "left-behind children in China" to "left-alone children in Italy", shedding light on how children themselves perceive and experience the care arrangements brought about by migration between the two countries. These migration trajectories reveal childrearing strategies across three interconnected levels, which may be flexibly adopted through children's different developmental stages: transnational strategies of pendulum migration to take advantage of global kinship networks and transnationally foster children; domestic strategies of navigating within Italy, either by moving with children or relocating them to live with a caregiver in other Italian cities; and local strategies of raising children themselves or entrusting them to a private Italian or Chinese caregiver within Prato. The challenges faced by children of Chinese migrants in Prato are not just a place-specific phenomenon but rather a continuation of structural vulnerabilities related to rural education systems and labour regimes in China. By extending the scholarship on left-behind children beyond their lived experience in China, this study bridges the academic understandings on Chinese families' care arrangements in a transnational setting.

[975] Yile Hu (Hong Kong University & Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient), Zhiyuan Jiang (Heidelberg University), Yue Xu (University of Liverpool) and Yuqing Cai (Nanjing University of the Arts). *The Travelling Xiqu in Multiple Spaces: Historical and Contemporary Processes of Xiqu Relocation.*

**Abstract.** Spanning from historical to contemporary era and addressing scales from transregional to transnational, this panel demonstrates how the locality of Xiqu（戲曲）has been reshaped in its relocation process.

Beginning with historical theatre architecture and archaeological evidence of the Song-Yuan period, the panel traces how the local styles and artistic conventions of theatrical performance across different Chinese regions have long been conditioned by the evolving performance spatial environments during the relocation process. Following this is an ethnographic study of contemporary itinerant Huangmeixi (黃梅戲) troupes from Anhui to Guangdong, exploring how performers negotiate the locality of their hometown Xiqu and participate in local culture formation in Guangdong. In a transnational context, this panel employs archival and ethnographic research to examine how Yueju (粵劇) has been preserved, adapted, and reinterpreted within Britain's Chinese community through localized practices and diasporic connections, thereby shaping dynamic notions of "Chineseness". Taking an institutional perspective, the case of Jingju (京劇) ensemble in Frankfurt, Germany is examined to see how locality of Xiqu is transregionally re-localized and institutionally repositioned within urban cultural fields, being reframed as community culture.

This panel reflects on the notion of treating Xiqu as a stable representation of local or national culture by valuing the fluidity of Xiqu's locality. It argues that the difficulty of transnational relocation may not be greater than that of internal relocation within China. And the local/national identity of Xiqu is constructed through the practices of agents across multiple local scales.

**Keywords:** Xiqu, Relocation, Transregional, Transnational, Fluidity, Locality

**Yile Hu (The University of Hong Kong, EFEO)** – *Ascending the Stage: Transregional Development of Early Theatrical Space in China*

This paper will analyze historical documents related to the early theatrical space and archaeological materials from the Song-Yuan period—encompassing theater pavilion sculptures, wall paintings, and extant stage structures, investigating the formation of the "Ascending the Stage" (登樓作戲) tradition and explores its transregional manifestations across northern and southern China. By investigating extant theatre stages from the Song-Yuan period predominantly located in Shanxi Province, it can be demonstrated that northern theatre stages embody an integration of early ornamental pavilion architecture with the performing arrangement. When comparing it with southern theatrical space, archaeological discoveries of theatrical artifacts in southern China reveal that, due to climatic, political, and cultural factors, the southern tradition of elevated stage performance emerged slightly later than its northern counterpart. Moreover, southern stages exhibit distinct characteristics: they feature higher platform bases and different spatial configurations for performance areas compared to northern examples. This research reveals that theatrical space typologies of the Song-Yuan period not only shared common structural characteristics but also evolved along multiple trajectories influenced by cultural exchange and functional

requirements, thereby offering fresh insights into the spatial logic of early Xiqu practice and patterns of regional interconnectivity.

**Zhiyuan Jiang (Heidelberg University)** – *Re-creating Locality: Internal Diaspora and Cultural Performance of Chinese Local Xiqu Troupes*

This research explores how internal diaspora Xiqu troupes perform their home-region culture in a transregional cultural context within Mainland China. It examines how these marginalized groups negotiate and re-create a new locality through transcultural performance. Historically, despite the emphasis on Xiqu's national identity since China's modernization by positioning it as the representative "Chinese culture", this millennia-old performing art flourished long before the modern nation-state concept of "China". It developed diverse forms in different regions and participated in the continuous shaping and re-shaping of locality through the transregional migration of Xiqu performance troupes. Adopting an ethnographic approach, this study investigates a Huangmeixi (黃梅戲) troupe's itinerancy from its homeland, in the mountainous region of Anhui Province, Eastern China, to an alien land, Guangdong Province on the Southern coast of China. The first part uses historical documents to examine the Huangmeixi culture in its homeland before troupes started to travel afar. It represents a unified identity of this region, yet debates about its origin still exist. The second part is based on fieldwork materials to analyze how, during the migration process, the troupe managed to open a marketplace in an alien region despite language barriers and vastly different customs. The third part analyzes when the Huangmeixi troupe is relocated to rural Guangdong, how a new homeland culture is recreated through negotiation. In conclusion, this research reflects on the monolithic of Xiqu's locality by proposing an episteme of a heterogeneous and metaphoric locality in local cultural performance.

**Yue Xu (University of Liverpool)** – *Negotiating "Chineseness": Xiqu and the Politics of Identity-Making in Britain since 1860s to date*

Britain, home to the first Chinatown in Europe since 1860s, has been formed through three major immigration waves: initial settlements by seamen in Liverpool in the 19th century, post-WWII arrivals from Hong Kong and southeastern China, and diverse new immigrants since the 1980s. Within this transnational community, Yueju (粵劇) has functioned not just as entertainment, but as a vital medium for expressing collective memory, performing identity, and forging transnational ties. This research investigates the ways Yueju has shaped notions of "Chineseness" from the 1860s to today in Liverpool of Britain. Using the ethnographic data and a multilingual corpus of institutional and community archives—including policy documents, oral histories, photographs, and scores—it traces the preservation, and reinterpretation of Yueju. The study focuses on three areas: private rehearsals, public festive performances, and fusion practices by younger generations. Through critical multimodal discourse and content analysis, it examines how archives construct, interpret, or marginalise this art form, contrasting external media representations with internal community narratives. Findings reveal that Yueju evolved from fostering internal cohesion, to external display and integration, and recently with the official recognition from Britain's local government. "Chineseness" transformed from static heritage into a dynamic resource for new artistic expression. This shift occurred as UK cultural policy formally incorporated Chinese culture into its multicultural vision, reframing the community from migrants to a settled minority. Ultimately, Britain's Chinese community strategically uses Yueju to negotiate authenticity, stereotypes, and multicultural expectations. Through these hybridised musical practices, they construct new, assertive forms of 'becoming' Chinese.

**Yuqing Cai (Nanjing University of the Arts and Heidelberg University)** – *Institutional Logics of Translocal Relocation: The Reproduction of Local Xiqu as Community Culture in Germany*

This paper investigates the institutional dimensions of Xiqu relocation in contemporary Germany, focusing on the Frankfurt Jingju (京剧) ensemble as a central case. Rather than treating Xiqu abroad as a straightforward instance of "cultural export", it conceptualizes its movement from specific Chinese regions to Frankfurt as a transregional process. In this process, regionally rooted performance traditions remain aesthetically and socially fluid even as they are anchored in a new urban locality. Drawing on archival research, policy documents and ethnographic fieldwork in Frankfurt, the study analyzes how municipal cultural offices, theatres and festivals, the Confucius Institute and diasporic associations jointly manage, classify and stage this relocation within the city's cultural field. It shows how these institutional actors position Xiqu within cultural-policy categories such as "heritage", "intercultural dialogue", "integration" and "community arts", and how such framings shape funding decisions, programming routines and the selection of ensembles and repertoires. Consequently, this study approaches the presence of Xiqu in Frankfurt as a place-to-place configuration produced by multiple institutional and community actors operating at various scales. Viewed through this lens, phenomena typically categorized as "Chinese culture abroad" manifest as an institutionalized process of repositioning. Within this dynamic, a mobile performance tradition is stabilized, reframed as community culture, and rendered legible within overlapping regimes of urban

cultural governance, diasporic world-making, and local cultural policy.

[978] Yifan Zhao (East China Normal Univeristy) and Yang Tong (East China Normal University). *Does "never lost contact" mean "permanently sweet"? ——Exploring Ethical Issues embedded in "AI Resurrection" of the Dead.*

**Abstract.** Nowadays, artificial intelligence technology can simulate the tone of voice, intonation and behaviour of human beings through the training of human corpus and information sets, and the use of digital human technology to "resurrect" the image of the deceased has increasingly become a popular social phenomenon. The study takes the hot digital "resurrection" phenomenon in China as the object of research, and examines the ethical impact of the phenomenon and its technological nature on the perception of the lives of the living and the existential essence of the deceased from the specific perspectives of technology, culture, and capital. By analyzing China's related cases, conducting 2121 questionnaires and 42 in-depth interviews, the study explores moral acceptance of digital resurrection among Chinese groups, revealing that although digital resurrection achieved by AI has addressed latent emotional needs of some bereaved individuals to reconnect with their deceased loved ones, it has also aggravated the ethical dilemmas regarding subjective identity, especially as the evolution of deepfake technology has seriously harmed the feelings of the living. While compensating for the desire for dialogue, AI digital "resurrection" also affects the certainty of death and the public's rational perception of life, and its commercialized capital attributes will result in even more serious violations of the rights and interests of the deceased and their relatives. The design of digital "resurrection" must harmonize ethical, legal, and emotional dimensions, aiming to provide healthy emotional outlets rather than substitutes for genuine experiences of life and death.

**Keywords:** Digital resurrection, Ethical problems, Ethical design, Digital immortality, Artificial intelligence

[983] Yinghua Luo (Nankai University), Qiyuan Liu (Tsinghua University) and Yishu Chen (University of Göttingen). *Digestible Modernities: Negotiating Nutrition, Technology, and Taste in Greater China (1920s–1990s).*

**Abstract.** This panel investigates how modern nutrition science was translated, contested, and materialized across Greater China (1920s–1990s). Moving beyond top-down intellectual histories, the four papers adopt a material and sensory approach, examining hospital kitchens, green vegetables, chlorella, and MSG, to trace the friction between laboratory standards and local bodies.

Paper 1 reconstructs the "scientific kitchen" at the Peking Union Medical College (PUMC). It reveals how the initial reliance on Western female dietitians failed to discipline Chinese palates, leading to a 1926 reorganization that successfully localized management but challenged Western definitions of scientific authority. Paper 2 analyzes the wartime construction of "green leafy vegetables," arguing that this category emerged by renetworking vitamin science with local material scarcity, thereby elevating local plants into "protective" nutrients essential for national survival. Paper 3 reassesses chlorella in Mao-era China, tracing how the global vision of "artificial food" was localized through mass science but broke down when techno-utopian promises met the disappointing realities of digestion, taste, and famine-time consumption. Paper 4 turns to Taiwan to explain the paradox of MSG: while industrial fermentation secured global export dominance, a rising middle class increasingly rejected the additive to perform "natural" social distinctions.

Drawing on institutional archives, scientific journals, and industry records, we argue that "nutrition" was never merely a biochemical fact. Instead, it was a negotiated process where state mobilization and industrial capitalism constantly grappled with the sensory agency of everyday eaters.

**Keywords:** nutrition science, sensory history, material culture, taste politics, STS, food technology, Greater China

**Yinghua Luo (Nankai University)** – *"Scientific Regression" or "Local Victory"? Sino-Western Personnel Negotiation in the PUMC Kitchen (1920s-1930s)*

Food serves as a visceral frontier where universal scientific standards encounter local bodily experiences. Previous scholarship on the Peking Union Medical College (PUMC) has focused on its contributions to nutritional science, often overlooking the internal practices of hospital catering. As the only hospital in Republican China prohibiting family-cooked meals, PUMC attempted to strictly enforce "scientific eating." Drawing on internal correspondence and administrative reports, this paper examines the tensions regarding gender, class, and cross-cultural management within the PUMC Department of Dietetics. Initially, PUMC prioritized hiring Western-trained, unmarried women to manage both Western and Chinese kitchens, aiming to institutionalize scientific dietetics. However, this arrangement sparked friction with the nursing staff over resource allocation and failed to reconcile

nutritional calculations with local palates, resulting in “unappetizing” Chinese food and budgetary deficits. The 1926 reorganization, which transferred the management of the Chinese kitchen from Western female dietitians to a Chinese male administrator, marked a pivotal shift. Although criticized by Western staff as a “regressive” step away from science, this localized management successfully resolved the crisis of taste and cost. This transition reveals the complex “politics of knowledge” negotiated between imported medical authority and indigenous culinary experiences during the modernization of medicine in China.

**Qiyuan Liu (Tsinghua University)** – *Coloring Nutrition: Green Vegetables and the Making of Protective Foods in Wartime China, 1930s–40s*

This article examines how “green leafy vegetables” (lüse shucai) took shape in wartime China in the 1930s–40s, when vitamin science was being popularized, and German-style nutrition was giving way to the American paradigm. It argues that the term “green vegetables” was a modern, globally inflected reinvention that linked biochemical experimentation to everyday eating, rather than a pure continuation of an enduring Chinese vegetarian tradition. The article argues that what came to be celebrated as a distinctively Chinese “vegetarian” diet was in fact a modern reinvention. “Green leafy vegetables” were neither a botanical class nor a single nutrient source, but a color-marked dietary composite that came to stand for a specifically Chinese way of eating, set against Euro-American imaginaries of meat-centred, high-protein diets. By repeatedly stressing the greenness, ubiquity, and low cost of local vegetables, and by investing them with the authority of vitamin discourse, wartime nutritionists fashioned a mode of “color nutrition” that was at once modern and traditional. In this renetworked configuration, previously devalued plant foods and local resources were recast as the very “nutrition” that might save the nation in wartime—a means of consolidating national pride and countering powerful claims about pervasive “Chinese deficiencies.” The article thus reads green vegetables as a key sign through which diet was nationalized, and the promise of a “sufficient and productive” modern China could be imagined.

**Yishu Chen (University of Göttingen)** – *Tasting Modernity in Taiwan: MSG’s Colonial Legacies, Industrial Pathways, and Taste Politics*

By the 1990s, Taiwan had emerged as the world’s leading exporter of monosodium glutamate (MSG), yet ironically, its domestic household use declined sharply during the same period. This article uses MSG as an analytical thread to explain this divergence, tracing its trajectory from a colonial symbol of "scientific cooking" to a contentious object of health politics. I argue that under Japanese rule, the colonial regime standardized "umami" via state monopoly and corporate networks. In the postwar era, Taiwan localized production and secured global dominance through innovations in fermentation. However, starting in the late 1960s, global discourses on "Chinese Restaurant Syndrome" were reinterpreted locally. This produced a middle-class divergence: while professional sectors maintained steady use, household consumers increasingly adopted "additive-free" eating as a strategy of social distinction. Empirically drawing on the Government-General of Taiwan archives, industry records, literary texts, and packaging, this study treats MSG as a "micro-object of modernity." Ultimately, it argues that this trajectory complicates the center-periphery dynamics of the global food system, revealing how an industrial triumph in the periphery can paradoxically trigger a cultural rejection of the very substance that powered its modernization.

[984] Liangzuo Hao (Loughborough University). *Negotiating a Less Unsettling Past: China’s Digital COVID-19 Museum as a Site of Public Memory.*

**Abstract.** This paper investigates the narrative strategies employed by the Chinese COVID-19 Online Museum (抗击新冠肺炎疫情专题展览), which was created by the authorities to commemorate the pandemic and was initially curated in a physical format before transitioning to a digital platform. As a form of digitalized official memory, the museum primarily constructs a triumphalist grand narrative that centers on the leadership of the country’s top leader and the Party, alongside a nationalist imagination of resilience and rebirth from disaster. However, this study contends that the museum does not merely reflect the official ideology; rather, it strategically leverages vernacular memories that do not contradict the official narrative. More specifically, the integration of grassroots experiences within the museum, including personal sacrifice and suffering, as well as community solidarity, serves to enhance the emotional appeal and legitimacy of official memory. The research employs multi-modal discourse analysis and narrative analysis to examine textual, visual, and audiovisual materials from the museum. Audiovisual analysis serves as a complementary approach to examine the visual and sonic elements of the museum’s digital exhibits. The findings contribute to the broader discussion on how official memory strengthens itself through vernacular stories and symbols in digital commemorative spaces, ultimately shedding light on the evolving dynamics between state narratives and grassroots historical experiences within a non-democratic environment.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Online museum, Digital memory, Official and vernacular memory, China

[985] Muzi Yu (Central Academy of Fine Arts). *Opaque Orders: Human-Technology Relations in the Algorithmic Age and the Translation of Chinese Cosmology.*

**Abstract.** This paper takes human-technology relations in the algorithmic age as its point of departure, examining how contemporary digital art draws on Chinese cosmological resources to rethink the position of the subject within technological orders. As digital technologies increasingly shape experiences of space, body, and identity, technology functions as an opaque order-environment: its effects are perceptible, while its operating logic remains concealed. Chinese cosmology also offers ways of understanding opaque orders. Fengshui attends to the invisible qi, directional structures, and environmental relations that organize space, while reincarnation, impermanence, and emptiness point to the fluidity and non-fixity of life, body, and consciousness.

Through the digital practices of Lawrence Lek and Lu Yang, this paper examines how such cosmological resources are translated into contemporary digital media through the respective dimensions of space and body. Lek's Geomancer draws on the figure of the geomancer(fengshui master) as a reader of spatial relations, repositioning AI from an environmental monitoring tool and subordinate role into a subject with creative desire. Lu Yang's DOKU series mobilizes Buddhist cosmological resources such as reincarnation, impermanence, the six realms, and emptiness, translating body and consciousness into processes of migration, fragmentation, and regeneration through digital avatars, data, images, and cycles of life.

Drawing on Yuk Hui's concept of cosmotechnics, this paper argues that although both artists' works participate in the formal convergence of global digital art, their internal logic articulates an Eastern-inflected response to human-technology relations centered on the repositioning of the subject. When traditional and contemporary opaque orders encounter one another, the subject is neither an external controller nor a passive object within technological systems. Rather, from within opaque orders, the subject comes to understand its mode of existence anew through reading, emplacement, transformation, and repositioning.

**Keywords:** Cosmotechnics, Opaque Orders, Human-Technology Relations, Chinese Cosmology, Digital Art

[986] Jiaxuan Huang (Leiden University). *Arm's Length Rapprochement: China's Dual Diplomacy of Détente and Legitimacy towards the United Nations (1954-55).*

**Abstract.** Writings analyzing China's influence and engagement with the United Nations (UN) during its non-membership period (1949-71) remain inadequate. Leveraging declassified Chinese archives, this article discusses three instances of China's rapprochement with the UN and related actors during 1954-55: China's official participation at the Fourth World Forestry Congress, Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld's visit to Peking, and the cordial interactions between Chinese diplomatic leaders and the World Federation of United Nations Associations. It examines the dual diplomatic policy that China adopted towards the UN, as reflected in these interactions: on one hand, these engagements mirrored the Conferences at Geneva and Bandung held in parallel, epitomizing China's diplomatic détente after the Korean War, the zenith of hostility to the UN; on the other hand, China maintained its longstanding assertion since 1949 that UN representation constituted an embodiment of State legitimacy. Paradoxically, while this dual diplomacy of détente and legitimacy spurred China to embrace opportunities for rapprochement with the UN, its inhibiting aspects, such as concerns about the possibility of "dual UN membership" and the prioritization of inter-State relations, also led Chinese diplomats to adopt a circumspect gesture in these interactions, thereby precluding China from enduring substantive engagement with the UN. It concludes that these cases encourage a reassessment of Sino-UN relations during China's non-membership period, in intricate detail and, more generally, reflecting the diversity and dynamism of the factors influencing China's foreign policy during the Cold War.

**Keywords:** Chinese diplomacy, Foreign policy, United Nations, Cold War, 1950s

[987] Chia-Wei Lin (Université de Lausanne), Longyu Zhang (Universiteit Gent) and Haoxue Yang (Seoul National University). *Buddhist and Nestorian Texts as Multilingual Contact Zones: Phonological, Lexical, and Grammatical Evidence.*

**Abstract.** Buddhist translation practices created a key environment of multilingual contact, where borrowing, pattern replication, convergence, and reanalysis took place. Bringing together three individual studies, this panel examines how Buddhist translations shaped phonological, lexical, and syntactic features across languages from Central Asia to East Asia, with Chinese as the mediating language. The first study focuses investigates Sino–Syriac and Sino–Iranian contact attested in the Jingjiao and Chinese Manichaean corpora and considers how these data can contribute to the historical phonology of Northwestern Chinese in addition to existing sources. The second case study investigates the grammaticalization of an apprehensional epistemic modal kǒng 恐 in Buddhist texts, showing

the asymmetry between advanced semantics and conservative surface structure, as compared to non-Buddhist texts, due to the semantic prominence of fear (kǒngbù 恐怖), which demonstrates how the discourse-specific semantic domain might influence the grammaticalization. The third research, extending the scope to Korean corpus, examines how jí 即/biàn 便 and yòu 又 / fù 復 are translated and used in Korean-Peninsula readings and Buddhist translations. This case study shows that earlier materials preserve clearer segmentations, while later translations consolidate or simplify these markers.
**Keywords:** language contact, historical linguistic, Middle Chinese

**Chia-Wei Lin (Université de Lausanne)** – *Chinese Transcriptions of Syriac and Iranian Sources as Evidence for Northwestern Chinese*
The language of Jingjiao (景教) and Chinese Manichaean texts exemplifies the rich transcultural interactions along the Silk Road. These materials simultaneously reflect influences from Syriac, Sogdian, Middle Persian, and Parthian literary traditions, while also showing how translators adapted existing Buddhist Chinese terminology to render Jingjiao and Manichaean religious concepts. In addition, these corpora preserve transcriptions of Syriac and Iranic proper names and technical terms, which represent an understudied source for the reconstruction of Northwestern Chinese. Northwestern Chinese is the variety spoken in the Hexi 河西 Corridor, a region that underwent intensive linguistic contact in the multilingual and multiscriptural environments of Dunhuang and Turfan. Here, Chinese developed alongside Khotanese (Brahmi script), Tibetan, Tangut, Old Turkic (Uyghur script), Sogdian, Sanskrit, and other languages and scribal traditions, resulting in a contact-rich linguistic landscape. While previous studies of Jingjiao and Chinese Manichaean texts have focused on cultural exchange between China, Manichaeism and Christianity, this paper examines Chinese transliteration of Syriac and Iranian names and technical terms as evidence of linguistic contact between Syriac, Middle Iranian languages, and Northwestern Chinese. Analysis of these renderings shows that they align with phonological developments proposed in reconstructions of Northwestern Chinese. Syriac and Iranian languages thus represent as an underused source for the historical phonology of northwestern Chinese, highlighting the value of cross-scriptural philology for Silk Road Studies.
**Longyu Zhang (Ghent University)** – *Delayed grammaticalization of kǒng 恐 in Buddhist Chinese: Constraints from discourse-specific semantic domain*
This study examines the development of kǒng 恐 from a lexical verb meaning ‘to fear’ into an apprehensional/epistemic marker in Middle Chinese Buddhist texts. While this development belongs to a broader cross-linguistic pathway whereby fear expressions come to encode the possibility of an undesirable event, Buddhist Chinese provides a particularly revealing case because it emerged within a multilingual textual environment shaped by translation and Buddhist narrative convention. Previous studies on kǒng, pà 怕, and kǒngpà 恐怕 have mainly relied on secular Chinese materials, treating Buddhist texts either marginally or as part of a general Middle Chinese corpus. Based on a corpus of Middle Chinese Buddhist texts, this study argues that Buddhist materials should not be treated as neutral supplementary data. In these texts, kǒng remains formally concentrated in relatively conservative syntactic environments close to the source meaning ‘to fear’. However, selected comparisons with Sanskrit parallels suggest that this formal conservatism does not necessarily reflect semantic archaism. In several cases, Chinese kǒng corresponds to Sanskrit constructions expressing apprehension, futurity, or evaluative assessment. This study describes this asymmetry as “covert grammaticalization”: semantic-pragmatic development of kǒng advances further than its overt syntactic reanalysis. This pattern is significant in Buddhist texts, where fear, danger, and karmic consequence are recurrent narrative themes. Such semantic environments may reinforce the older fear-domain construction while simultaneously making apprehensional inference highly available. This “covert grammaticalization” of kǒng reflects the interaction between Chinese grammaticalization pathways, Buddhist narrative semantics, and translation practices across Indic and Chinese textual traditions.
**Haoxue Yang (Seoul National University)** – *Translation Correspondence and Discourse Functions of ji/biàn (即/便) and yòu/fù (又/復) in Korean Peninsula Translations of Buddhist Scriptures*
This study briefly analyzes how 即/便 and 又/復 are translated in Korean-Peninsula Buddhist scripture translations. We use a corpus spanning pre-15th-century gugyeol-glossed texts and post-15th-century eonhae translations, and we annotate token correspondences and clause relations. In early materials, 便 maps to ‘곧’ (“at once”), and 即 appears as ‘即이’ or ‘곧’. When 即便 occurs, it is often segmented as ‘即히 便이’, preserving a two-part structure. After the fifteenth century, 即 is rendered as ‘즉자히’ or omitted (Ø), 便 continues as ‘곧’, and 即便 is consolidated as ‘즉자히/즉재’ or expressed with a clause-final marker of immediacy. For 又/復, a lone 又 maps to ‘또/또한’ (additive), and a lone 復 to ‘또한/다시’ (iterative/resumptive). The collocation 又復 is rendered as ‘또한 또’ or ‘또

다시’, marking resumption or progression. Later materials show 即 and 便 both meaning “immediately”; together they may appear as two “immediately” tokens or with one dropped. 又 and 復 show a similar near-synonym pattern: alone they map to ‘또’; together they read as “and again”, sometimes with one omitted. Both pairs support forward linking and, at times, a contrastive turn.

[990] Ivana Gubic (University of Zagreb). *Negotiating Brush Talk: Constraints and Friction in Eighteenth-Century Yŏnhaengnok Encounters.*

**Abstract.** Scholarship on brush talk (筆談) has tended to present it as an elegant and efficient means of communication across linguistic boundaries in premodern East Asia. Drawing on a group of eighteenth-century yŏnhaengnok (燕行錄) diaries written by Chosŏn envoys during missions to Beijing, this paper examines that assumption by turning to moments when brush talk proved awkward, limited, or generated friction in actual interaction. These diaries record situations in which interlocutors hesitated to put certain topics into writing, struggled with unexpected vocabulary or stylistic choices, or found the physical circumstances of writing cumbersome. On the basis of these examples, the papers outlines a typology of constraints that shaped such exchanges, including material, linguistic, social and affective dimensions. Thinking about brush talk through these categories help bring into view the amount of negotiation and interpretive work involved in what is often imagined as a straightforward practice. It also shows how interlocutors assessed and adjusted their communicative strategies depending on the setting and the person they were facing. By sketching this typology, the paper aims to offer a more grounded account of both the possibilities and limits within late Qing-Chosŏn encounters. The analysis suggests that contemporaries were aware of the vulnerabilities of written communication and approached brush talk with caution rather than idealisation. Recognising this dynamics allows us to nuance the familiar narrative of brush talk as an inherently effective medium and to see it instead as a context- dependent practice whose outcomes varied across different encounters.

**Keywords:** brush talk, cross-lingual communication, yŏnhaengnok, Qing-Chosŏn encounters

[991] Duo Xu (University of Hamburg), Junfu Wong (The University of Hong Kong) and Kexin Wang (Beijing City University). *Imperial Chang’an: The Role of Religion, Music, and Visual Culture in Political Legitimacy and Cultural Integration.*

**Abstract.** As the capital of successive dynasties, Chang’an served as a central site where arts, performance and religious forms were mobilized to shape political authority and negotiate cultural exchange. This panel examines how cultural production in the city contributed to imperial legitimacy and facilitated interaction between local and transregional traditions during the medieval period. Through material, textual, and art-historical approaches, the papers consider Chang’an as a setting in which artistic practice and religious performance structured social identities and articulated political power.

Junfu Wong analyses religious stone stelae sponsored by lay associations, showing how their inscriptions reveal communal roles and ritual practices aimed at extending religious merit and collective memory. Kexin Wang focuses on Zhang Yanyuan’s Records of Famous Paintings of All Dynasties, demonstrating how his firsthand encounters with artworks in Chang’an informed his construction of a new genealogy of Chinese painters. Taken together, the papers show how and why Chang’an operated as a crucial environment in which religious practice, visual culture, and performance intersected to shape political legitimacy and promote cultural integration in medieval China.

**Keywords:** Imperial Legitimacy, Medieval East Asian Music History, Cultural and Ritual Integration, Medieval East Asian Visual Culture

**Junfu Wong (University of Hong Kong)** – *Practising Ritual: A Functional Re-examination of Patronage Registers on Guanzhong Stone Stelae in the Premodern Period*

Changan, a pivotal hub of cultural exchange during the premodern period, fostered the creation of religious stone stelae by lay associations. Notably, these stelae feature a fruitful corpus of inscriptions that documented the names and titles of their patrons, offering invaluable insights into lay religious associations. Nevertheless, scholarship has predominantly treated these registers as mere textual compilations of names, isolating them from their original context on the stelae. This methodological approach proves problematic, as it severs the patronage registers from their integral connections to the spatial arrangement and iconography on the stelae, thereby obscuring their overall material presence. Designed to address this gap, this paper seeks to demonstrate how a visual re-examination of these patronage registers can prompt a significant rethinking of their possible function and meaning. Part one systematically examines the titles ascribed to patrons within the patronage register to define their precise

communal roles. It specifically investigates titles demonstrably tied to ritual performance. Drawing extensively on scriptural and historical texts, this section reconstructs the potential material components and procedures involved in the rituals organised and practised by these lay associations. Part two shifts to the visual dimension, arguing that the patronage registers intrinsically embody ritual elements through their physical layout and format. It posits that the registers act not merely as textual records, but as spatial representations of the ritual in action. By inscribing their ritual onto stone, lay believers sought to perpetuate the efficacy of their ritual, ensuring continuous merit generation beyond their lifetimes.

**Kexin Wang (Beijing City University)** – *The Influence of Tang Dynasty Murals and Scroll Paintings in Chang'an on Zhang Yanyuan's Construction of the Artist Genealogy*

In the 9th century, Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 compiled Records of Famous Paintings of All Dynasties (歷代名畫記, Lidai minghua ji) in which he constructed a genealogy of painters from the 3rd to the 8th century by combining master–disciple lineages with stylistic groupings. Earlier genealogies from the 3rd to 6th centuries relied almost entirely on blood ties or direct mentorship, and even the 8th-century accounts of Li Sizhen 李嗣真 and Dou Meng 竇蒙 did not establish lineages based solely on shared style. Zhang's organization therefore represents a significant shift, reflecting an evaluative system grounded in firsthand visual experience rather than inherited textual tradition. This article argues that Zhang's exposure to the murals and scroll paintings preserved or relocated to the temples and palace precincts of Chang'an played a decisive role in shaping his genealogical framework. With most pre-Tang scroll paintings lost in warfare and the Tang court collections inaccessible, Zhang traveled widely within Chang'an to study temple murals and paintings held in literati collections. By comparing these works with the descriptions preserved in earlier texts, he was able to reconstruct stylistic continuities and infer artistic lineages that would otherwise have been impossible to discern. Through close reading of Lidai minghua ji alongside surviving Chang'an murals and related textual evidence, this study demonstrates how the visual environment of the Tang capital informed Zhang's historical imagination and enabled him to formulate a new model of stylistic genealogy in Chinese art history.

[992] Bianca Basciano (Ca' Foscari University of Venice) and Anna Morbiato (Ca' Foscari University of Venice). *A study on the production of Chinese resultative verb compounds by L1 Italian learners: a morpho-syntactic and information-structural analysis.*

**Abstract.** This talk presents a quantitative and qualitative study on the acquisition of resultative verb compounds (RVCs) by Italian L1 learners of Chinese, a category known to be particularly challenging due to its morphosyntactic and semantic complexity (Yu 2003, Zhang 2014). We focus specifically on VP resultatives, i.e. constructions in which the result is encoded by the verb phrase as a whole, rather than just by V2. Particular attention is devoted to resultatives where the V2 is 在 zài 'be at', introducing a result location:

(1) 他把鞋子放在鞋柜里。'He puts the shoes in the shoe cabinet.'

The dataset consists of written productions from 162 university students (beginners, intermediate, advanced) and 33 native speakers, elicited through a video-description task.

Learners at lower proficiency levels produce proportionally more VP resultatives than directional constructions and change-of-state resultatives (e.g. 擦干净 'wipe-clean'). Advanced learners invert this distribution, producing directional and change-of-state resultatives at rates closer to native speakers. The qualitative analysis reveals recurrent error patterns, including omission of the V2 head (e.g. 放[在]桌子上) and misplacement of the resultative phrase in preverbal position. We argue that these errors reflect difficulties in reorganizing syntactic features due to L1 transfer (cf. Yuan & Zhao 2009). We analyze learners' errors both from a syntactic and from an information-structural perspective. Despite the central role of information structure in shaping constituent order in acquisition remains understudied. The developmental patterns observed across proficiency levels shed new light on how learners gradually integrate syntactic, semantic, and information-structural requirements in mastering Chinese RVCs.

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**Keywords:** resultative verb compounds, acquisition, morpho-syntax, information structure

[995] Daniele Brombal (Ca' Foscari University of Venice; LAST Lab at Ca' Foscari University of Venice), Chiara Bartoletti (Ca' Foscari University of Venice; LAST Lab at Ca' Foscari University of Venice), Chiara Bertulessi (University of Insubria), Maria Stella Burgio (Ca' Foscari University of Venice; LAST Lab at Ca' Foscari University of Venice; Beijing Normal University (BNU)), Sergio Conti (Roma Tre University; LAST Lab at Ca' Foscari University of Venice), Mengmeng Cui (Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa; LAST Lab at Ca' Foscari University of Venice), Lu Lin (Ca' Foscari University of Venice; LAST Lab at Ca' Foscari University of Venice) and Emma Lupano (University of Cagliari). *Political Ecology and Ecolinguistics Research for China's Social-Ecological Regeneration. Novel approaches, emerging evidence, and pathways ahead.*

**Abstract.** This double panel showcases trans-disciplinary work at the crossroads of political ecology and ecolinguistics, applied to the study of human-nature relations in today's China. The panel largely originates from work conducted at Ca' Foscari University's LAST Lab, aimed at leveraging the potential of language-based Area Studies to produce impactful knowledge for social-ecological regeneration. The panel is structured in two sessions, each informed by a distinctive blend of methodologies. The first session is grounded in political ecology and provides insights on co-creative mixed methods (on-site and on-line workshops, participatory ethnography) for the study of social-ecological dynamics. The three presentations will share methodological insights and fresh empirical evidence on bottom-up place-shaping and territorial governance, the potential of counter-narratives to transform environmental planning, and agro-ecological transitions geared towards social-ecological regeneration. The second session draws on eco-linguistic approaches, unveiling the logics of sustainability discourses articulated by State and corporate actors. The first presentation introduces the results of an AI-assisted collaborative workshop, undertaken with prospective Chinese environmental practitioners to critically appraise and redesign local development policies. The second explores corpus-assisted methodologies for the study of linguistic patterns characterizing ESG reporting by Chinese companies. The third introduces the results of a mixed-methods discourse analysis on green energy transitions in China. Upon opening the first session, the chair will offer a concise outline of the scientific significance of synergies across different approaches covered by this panel. Implications of the presented research for research, policy, and practice will be discussed with the audience in a conclusive Q&A, facilitated by panelists.

**Keywords:** Political ecology, Ecolinguistics, Social-Ecology, Regeneration, China

**Lu Lin (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)** – *Regenerating human-nature connections in Yunnan, China: Participatory and co-creative approaches to urban-rural transitions*

This presentation draws from a doctoral project exploring grassroots practices of social-ecological regeneration at the urban-rural interface in Yunnan province. One of China's most ecologically and culturally diverse regions, Yunnan's richness in biocultural diversity is increasingly threatened by top-down, extractive development patterns. Such patterns are designed and executed through modernist, centralised governance models and powerful corporate interests, which has long shaped China's territorial planning. These forces continue to erode local knowledge, ecological continuity, and the relational ways of living that once sustained balance between people and place. Drawing on relational thinking and theories of regeneration, this study embraces a participatory action research (PAR) approach, seeking to explore local political ecologies aimed at restoring and reimagining human–nature relationships in Yunnan's transitional landscapes. By means of situated co-creative and art-based practices, it aims at unearthing and enabling the potential of local bottom-up action in informing sustainability and regeneration beyond conventional technocratic paradigms. This presentation shares the analytical framework and preliminary findings of this study, based on desk review of documents and pilot fieldwork conducted in preparation of the core part of field activities, scheduled in Summer and Autumn 2026. Besides laying the foundation for further research on these topics, preliminary results provide insights about the vitality and viability of bottom-up initiatives for regeneration, as well as on their potential to impact local territorial and environmental governance.

**Chiara Bartoletti (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)** – *How can agrifood systems be regenerated? A bottom-up inquiry from China*

Amid the pressing urgency of the social-ecological crisis, in the past two decades the concept of sustainability and its dominant developmental paradigm—most visibly represented by the Sustainable Development Goals—has been widely criticized for failing to halt environmental and social degradation. Scholars have highlighted its embedded anthropocentrism, mechanistic worldview, reliance on generalized solutions, and techno-fix approaches to socio-ecological problems. As a response, regeneration or "regenerative sustainability" has emerged as an alternative paradigm, advocating holistic, process-oriented, and place-based approaches that support the thriving of social-ecological systems. Agrifood systems, which strongly affect ecosystems and are closely linked to issues of social

justice, are among the sectors where regeneration is urgently needed. Yet the concepts of regeneration and regenerative practices have already been defined in academic debates and have also been co-opted by industrial agriculture to reinforce eco-modernist narratives. This raises important questions about how regeneration can be defined from the bottom up in ways that reflect its emphasis on place-based approaches, and how such a context-specific definition can be meaningfully situated within the Chinese agrifood landscape. This contribution addresses these questions by presenting the results of a participatory online workshop that brought together practitioners from different fields within China's agrifood system. Through collaborative activities, participants identified drivers, practices, and outcomes of regeneration and co-created a working definition that can serve as a foundation for further social-ecological research.

**Daniele Brombal (Ca' Foscari University of Venice) and Mengmeng Cui (Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa / Ca' Foscari University of Venice)** – *Regenerating environmental planning through counter-narrative practices. A novel protocol and its application to Chinese projects in South-East Asia and Africa*

Ecosystems and biocultural diversity are in peril around the world as a consequence of large-scale infrastructures and associated processes of urbanization and industrialization. This trend is exacerbated by a construction frenzy triggered by China's emergence as a global player and the ensuing competition to access resources in developing countries. Conventional environmental planning has proven inadequate to cope with these issues. Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) are no exception: despite its ubiquitous adoption as statutory requirement for projects' approval, EIA has failed to curb extractivist patterns fueling the social-ecological crisis. Most research blames this on inaccurate information and lack of public participation. While these issues are undeniable, environmental planning inadequacies are first and foremost rooted in the discursive dimension: planning documents systematically normalize one-fits-all solutions, undermining the legitimacy of any alternative to hegemonic discourses. Against this backdrop, we propose a novel co-creative protocol aimed at transforming EIA from a routine checklist to a regenerative practice. Its core is an eco-linguistic module, designed to address the instrumental omission of aspects key to the well-being of humans and broader ecosystems. By assisting communities in challenging narratives incorporated in EIAs, the protocol contributes to legitimizing concerns key to social-ecological regeneration across the realms of ethics, emotions, aesthetics, and knowledge. This presentation shares the protocol methodology and results of test applications on Chinese projects in Laos and Kenya, discussing implications for future research, policy, and practice.

**Maria Stella Burgio (Ca' Foscari University of Venice / Beijing Normal University)** – *Sustainable narratives: An AI-assisted participatory workshop on language influence on Chinese environmental decision-making*

This presentation introduces an AI-assisted participatory workshop exploring how linguistic variations influence decision-making in the field of Chinese environmental policy and planning. At the core of the workshop are two versions of the introductory section of a prefecture-level city work report: the original text and an AI-assisted re-storyed version. The re-storying process, implemented in ChatGPT 4o, followed a systematic modification informed by the tenets of regenerative sustainability. The modification was grounded in a set of semantic and syntactic variables of ecolinguistic significance, identified through a corpus analysis of 456 governmental documents and validated through a questionnaire survey. ChatGPT worked as narrative co-designer, allowing for the controlled manipulation of linguistic variables to test how alternative framings influence mental models, collective reasoning, and future-oriented decision-making. The workshop engaged MA and PhD students from the School of Environment at Beijing Normal University and consisted of three interconnected activities: 1) participatory systems mapping; 2) futures envisioning; 3) collective writing. Working in two groups, each exposed to one of the two texts, participants were guided to construct a sustainable urban vision projected 30 years into the future, which was then articulated as a 10-point strategic implementation plan, reflecting how linguistic choices led to different future visions. This contribution shows the innovative potential of combining AI-assisted re-storying with participatory methodologies, highlighting how Large Language Models can be strategically integrated into collaborative settings to interrogate environmental policy discourses and foster experimentation with regenerative narratives.

**Sergio Conti (Roma Tre University) and Chiara Bertulessi (University of Insubria)** – *Environmental sustainability in the ESG reports of Chinese companies: A preliminary collocation analysis from an ecolinguistic perspective*

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) reporting has recently emerged as a standard practice among listed companies to communicate their commitment to sustainability. Beyond its informative function, ESGs represent a powerful discursive tool for shaping companies' public image amid mounting pressure for corporate accountability. The discursive dimension of such reports has been addressed in several studies. Conti et al. (2025) combined keyword analysis with thematic clustering to analyze Chinese ESGs from an ecolinguistic perspective. Their findings suggest that private-sector discourse is more standardized and techno-oriented, whereas public-sector discourse

tends to echo State ideology. Building on Conti et al. (2025), this study analyzes collocation patterns in Chinese ESG reports, with a focus on sustainability-related vocabulary. First, we extracted the environmental sustainability sections from a corpus of 136 ESG reports issued by 68 public companies (List A) and 68 private companies aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (List B); second, the 100 most frequent words in each subcorpus were semantically annotated under five dimensions—Environment, Society, Governance, and Other. Finally, we analyzed collocations of words tagged under "Environment" and occurring in both subcorpora. Preliminary evidence shows that List A tends to echo State ideology by prioritizing an optimistic attitude towards sustainability, whereas List B is techno-oriented and prone to foreground contentious issues. These results provide insights on how discourses focused on development may undergo a "greening" process, raising concerns about potential greenwashing.
Conti et al. 2025. Doi: 10.1075/cld.24038.con

**Emma Lupano (University of Cagliari)** – *When the sheep becomes photovoltaic. Narratives of renewable energy communities in China*

In recent years, China has advanced the development of renewable energy sources as part of its "double carbon" (双碳) policy, a pillar of the country's strategy for ecological transition. This commitment was reaffirmed in the 2024 Guiding Opinions on Vigorously Implementing Renewable Energy Substitution Actions, issued by the National Development and Reform Commission. This study, developed within the project "EMC 2 -Energy in Multilingual and multicultural Communication and Communities" at the University of Cagliari (e.INS – Spoke 7 - NextGenerationEU), discusses how renewable energy is represented and promoted in China's contemporary public discourse. It does so by analysing five case studies of community-based initiatives in urban and rural contexts through the examination of three corpora related to a selection of institutional sources, providers, and newspapers, and relying on a mixed-methods approach that applies phraseology, metaphor analysis and discourse analysis supported by corpus linguistics tools. Findings show how energy transition is predominantly framed as a positive phenomenon, through discourses that emphasise the link between innovation and development, the 'environmental naturalness' of renewable technologies, and the collective practical and moral benefits of renewables, thereby promoting alignment with national goals. By analysing the strategies used in Chinese public discourse to promote sustainable behaviour and citizen participation, and by investigating how discursive patterns can shape public perception and legitimise policies in a distinct cultural and political environment, this study contributes to the broader academic discussion on sustainability and discourse.

[997] Yuqi Cao (Tsinghua University). *The Spatial Logic of State Governance: Spatial Relations between Administrative Hierarchy and the Grain Tribute System in Yangzhou Prefecture (1766–1908).*

**Abstract.** In Qing institutional history, the "Chong-Fan-Pi-Nan" classification system has traditionally been understood as a bureaucratic instrument for personnel management and official appointment. This study argues that the system also functioned as a mechanism of spatial governance.Focusing on Yangzhou Prefecture, a strategic hub connecting the economically prosperous Jiangnan region with the imperial political center, the research examines the relationship between administrative hierarchy and the grain tribute transport system.It demonstrates that counties assigned higher administrative grades were often those bearing heavier grain tribute obligations, revealing a deliberate correspondence between state resource allocation and fiscal extraction.

Drawing on Historical GIS (H-GIS) and cost-distance modeling, the study further interprets the classification system as a means through which the Qing state managed spatial risks along the Grand Canal.Faced with the challenges of governing a vast empire, the state concentrated administrative resources in critical transportation nodes in order to secure the grain tribute network and strengthen its infrastructural capacity. The findings suggest that administrative ranking was not merely a reflection of local conditions but formed part of a broader strategy for maintaining imperial integration and fiscal stability.

Finally, through a diachronic analysis covering the period from 1766 to 1908, this research investigates the durability of this spatial governance logic. It explores how the relationship between administrative hierarchy and grain transport evolved as the Grand Canal's strategic importance declined in the late Qing period. In doing so, the study reveals the underlying rationale through which the Qing state sought to balance administrative costs with the protection of fiscal security.

**Keywords:** Administrative Hierarchy, Grain Tribute System, Spatial Governance

[999] Man Zhang (LMU Munich), Mark Czellér (University of Oxford), Damian Mandzunowski (Heidelberg University), Aminda Smith (Michigan State University) and Min Chen (University of Freiburg). *Friction or Feedback? Complaint, Criticism, and Appeal in Maoist China.*

**Abstract.** The People's Republic of China in the Mao era (1950s-1970s) is often characterized by overwhelming ideological and political control. And yet, new access to archival and other sources continues to reveal a governance system that was surprisingly responsive to, and in some cases even dependent upon, voices from below. This panel explores how people navigated the new socialist order through diverse channels of complaint, criticism, and appeal. Drawing on criminal case files, the first paper demonstrates how the legal system provided institutional channels for appeals, allowing individuals to challenge verdicts in a process that paradoxically contributed to the stabilization of socialist rule. Moving from the courtroom to the countryside, the second presentation utilizes internal police journals to map forms of anonymous rural resistance, analyzing how security organs interpreted and responded to slogans and leaflets criticizing the hardships of the Great Leap Forward. Shifting to the cultural sphere, the third contribution argues that reader criticism of new socialist comics (lianhuanhua) functioned not merely as dissent, but as a feedback loop integral to the production and revision of socialist visual culture. In the fourth paper, an exploration of the public and private lives of labor models shows how these ordinary people supported, challenged, and changed politics and culture. The chair and discussant will draw from their extensive scholarship on Maoist political practice to help illuminate how these acts of friction—legal, rural, cultural, and political—coalesced. In sum, the panel aims to expand our understanding of the permitted political boundaries in the early PRC.

**Keywords:** PRC History, propaganda, everyday politics, state-society relations, twentieth century

**Man Zhang (University of Munich)** – *Complaints, Appeals, and Criminal Justice in the Early PRC*

The Maoist era emphasizes overwhelming political and ideological control. Law and individual legal rights seem marginal to everyday governance. Many scholars similarly describe the early PRC legal system as subordinated to Maoist politics, rendering formal rights largely inoperative. While partially valid, this view risks underestimating the complexity of Chinese Communist Party rule and the sources of its resilience. Drawing on criminal case files and official documents from the 1950s, this study demonstrates that, despite political constraints, the legal system provided limited yet meaningful institutional channels for individuals to file complaints and appeals. These procedures enabled individuals to contest verdicts, challenge evidence, and sometimes secure retrial, reversals, or sentence reductions, even within a political climate hostile to such actions. The paper addresses two central questions: How were individuals able to voice dissent against judicial outcomes when politics dominated law? And why did so many persist in appealing, despite the risk of being branded counterrevolutionary? By reconstructing the petitioners' strategies, state responses, and case outcomes, the paper reveals that the early PRC legal order was not simply repressive but a contested terrain. Individuals engaged the state on its own procedural terms, thereby contributing—paradoxically—to the legitimization and stabilization of socialist rule.

**Mark Czellér (Oxford University)** – *Counterrevolution or Hunger? Interpreting Anonymous Criticism during the Great Leap Forward*

The CCP's rural policies in the 1950s imposed a series of hardships on large segments of the population, culminating in the famine produced by the Great Leap Forward. Scholars have long noted that Chinese farmers exhibited considerably less resistance than their counterparts in the Soviet Union had to their government's extractive and ultimately starvation-producing policies, but there has been little research into non-violent resistance in the form of anonymous critiques of government policy. Such critiques, expressed in slogans painted or carved onto publicly visible surfaces or in leaflets reproduced using rudimentary technology, are widely recorded in internal police journals in the period between collectivization and the Party's retreat from the policies of the Great Leap (approximately 1956 to 1962). This paper relies primarily on such journals to investigate how the police system interpreted and dealt with anonymous criticism of the Party's rural policies, tracing how an initial tendency to see all these phenomena as manifestations of counterrevolution was gradually - though by no means entirely - replaced by a more nuanced set of narratives that acknowledged the reality of hardship and hunger. In addition, and as far as possible in light of the limitations of the sources, the paper also seeks to make a contribution to our understanding of the extent and nature of popular resistance during the Great Leap Forward.

**Damian Mandzunowski (Heidelberg University)** – *Reader Criticism of New Socialist Comics (Lianhuanhua)*

As a popular medium combining simple texts with affective images, Chinese comic books (lianhuanhua) were of immediate relevance to the political communication of the People's Republic of China (PRC). While the rapid nationalization of the industry and the cleansing of extant titles ushered in a new age of socialist production, criticism of the new lianhuanhua persisted. This criticism took many forms: from two 1952 People's Daily letters, in

which volunteer soldiers and factory workers objected to “vulgar” depictions of their class comrades; to a 1956 issue of Meishu where readers attacked titles for propagating idealism and spiritualism; to the 1960 discovery of hidden Guomindang imagery in a provincial lianhuanhua pictorial; or, in 1961, to a Wenhui bao reader’s objection to the simplistic use of historical settings as veiled political commentary. Treating these complaints as evidence of a controlled but polyphonic public reading sphere, this paper offers the first comprehensive study of socialist lianhuanhua through the lens of negative feedback loops. The paper argues that dissenting voices did not merely penetrate the mainstream media landscape; rather, they functioned as an integral mechanism of socialist lianhuanhua creation. Because these voices often came from within the “people,” authorities treated them seriously. This dynamic not only sheds light on the complexity of post-1949 public visual literacy but also reveals a system where criticism led directly to the redrawing and renewed printing of selected titles. Ultimately, this cycle of critique and revision complicates binary views of permitted and unpermitted artistic creation in Maoist China.

**Aminda Smith (Michigan State University)** – *The True Stories of Labor Models in Maoist China*

Labor models were stars in Maoist China. They featured prominently in state propaganda and other cultural productions. Critics of the Communist Party often charge that labor models were more fiction than fact. Yet while propaganda sometimes flattened a more complicated reality, this was not always the case. Some widely publicized tales portrayed labor models as multi-faceted individuals who struggled, like everyone else, to make sense of and live according to new ideological and political contexts. Furthermore, while these stories were polished, they were not simply fictions. Labor models were real people, known by their neighbors and recognizable to others as genuine representations of ordinary people. Propagandists understood that their stories had to be more true than false or they would ring hollow. In internal publications, we see state actors struggling to work with labor models whose real lives did not fit the ideological ideal. This paper explores the public and private lives of Li Shunda and Shen Jilan, labor models from Shanxi Province. Using propaganda, internal reports, memoirs, and oral histories, this paper shows that labor models were shaped by socialist politics and culture, but they also played a key role in shaping those things. Labor models were usually real people, who supported the goals of the state and had benefitted from socialist policies. But they also questioned and challenged state directives, and sometimes changed both policy and the way labor and politics were understood and portrayed in the early PRC.

[1000] Mariana Münning (Heidelberg University), Yurou Zhong (University of Toronto), Mattis List (University of Passau), Ling Li (Universidade do Minho, Braga), Florian Keßler (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg), Yixiang Li (The Chinese University of Hong Kong) and Andreas Guder (Freie Universität Berlin). *Strokes, Symbols, Structures: Working Chinese Characters in Education, Philology, and Math.*

**Abstract.** The graphic complexity of Chinese characters has long challenged learners, teachers, and researchers across disciplines. Throughout history, diverse actors confronted with tasks such as classification, lexicography, pedagogy, script reform, and digital input have developed distinct analytical schemes and ordering or retrieval principles. These approaches reflect not only methodological choices, but also the cultural and sociological contexts in which Chinese writing was understood, taught, and reshaped.

This panel examines how Chinese characters have been analyzed, systematized, altered, and taught from antiquity to the present. Particular attention is given to philologists, educators, missionaries, and mathematicians, whose work on character structure, decomposition, and functional interpretation illuminates broader debates about the nature of the script, literacy, modernity, and the social role of the Chinese characters. Beyond individual graphs, the panel also explores the analysis and didactic standardization of larger linguistic and quasi-symbolic forms, including mathematical set phrases whose formulaicity approaches symbolic formulas. Further discussions address historical watersheds, such as debates about the abolition of the Chinese Characters, the Script Reforms in the PRC or the introduction of QWERTY keyboard computer input standards. Just as importantly, not only how the characters can be input in computers but also how they can be analyzed by computers as important research methodology, plays an important role in this panel.

Together, these contributions offer a multifaceted view of how Chinese characters—and the textual, symbolic, and pedagogical structures they support—are worked with, worked on, and worked through across educational, philological, digital, mathematical, and sociocultural contexts.

**Keywords:** Chinese characters, Graphemics, Philology, Education, Math, Computers, Digital Humanities, Missionary linguistics

**Ling Li (Universidade do Minho, Braga)** – *Joaquim Afonso Gonçalves's Alphabetic Arrangement of Chinese Characters: A Philological and Pedagogical Innovation in Early 19th-Century Western Sinology*

The Chinese writing system, with its logographic nature and lack of an alphabet, has historically presented significant challenges for non-native learners. Throughout the 19th century, which marks the beginning of specialized sinology, European scholars sought systematic methods to classify Chinese characters and enhance their teaching and learning. Among them, the Portuguese missionary Joaquim Afonso Gonçalves (1781–1841), assigned to the China mission, developed an innovative alphabetic arrangement based on structural breakdown, designed to facilitate systematic character study and memorization. This study examines Gonçalves's system as presented in the first chapter "Alphabeto China" of his Arte China (1829), focusing on its tripartite classification of Chinese characters into strokes, radicals, and differences. This analysis situates his approach within the broader context of 19th-century Western sinology and pedagogical strategies, comparing it to analytical and lexicographic methods proposed by other European scholars of the same period. By interpreting Gonçalves's metalinguistic descriptions in the preface of Arte China and assessing his alphabetic analysis within prevailing linguistic frameworks, this article evaluates its didactic and lexicographic significance. Through a historical-comparative lens, it sheds light on early Western attempts to systematically structure and teach Chinese script, contributing to the history of Chinese language pedagogy and bilingual lexicography.

**Yurou Zhong (University of Toronto)** – *Script Revolution in Action: Revisiting Wei Jiangong's Sojourns in Korea and Taiwan*

Wei Jiangong—a leading phonologist, philologist and lexicographer of twentieth-century China—was a script revolutionary who advocated for the eradication of the Chinese script. On the one hand, Wei was an accomplished philologist who contributed to the compilation of the world's most popular dictionary—Xinhua Zidian, laying the groundwork for character pedagogy for modern China. On the other, Wei was a steadfast supporter of the script revolution, mobilizing his linguistic and philological expertise for the arguments of the eventual abolishment of the Chinese script and the advent of a Chinese alphabet in the Roman-Latin form. This paper asks: How did Wei—like many other script revolutionaries—deal with the obvious contradiction in their theory on and practice of the Chinese script? How did his pedagogy of the Chinese language and script inform his revolutionary ideal? In turn, how did the revolutionary telos of a Roman-Latin Chinese alphabet transcribing a Chinese national language shape his pedagogical and lexicographic practices? This paper focuses on his sojourns in Korea (1927-1928) and Taiwan (1946-1948). An anthology titled Trivial Talks of My Korean Sojourn documenting his days teaching Chinese in Korea under Japanese rule, as well as a series of essays that Wei wrote in service of promoting the Chinese national language in Taiwan post the Japanese rule, reveal how script revolutionaries like Wei had to come to terms with all three forms of linguistic nationalism—Chinese, Japanese, and Korean—strategize against the Japanese colonial institution, and reimagine an international, progressive, alphabetic Chinese script.

**Mariana Münning (Heidelberg University)** – *Sound over Shape or Shape over Sound? Chinese Character Analysis, Script Reform, and Literacy Education in the First Half of the Twentieth Century*

The 20th century saw both script and education reforms. China's striving for modernization, self-assertion, and competitiveness led to a reassessment of its national heritage. General education was introduced, aiming at alphabetizing the entire populace. To ease the learning of Chinese characters, various script reform schemes were circulated—often perceived as revolutionary but in fact deeply rooted in traditional philology. Actors like Qian Xuantong advocated for the use of historical or non-standard character variants with fewer strokes, or for applying calligraphic techniques of stroke contraction. Yet, reformers sought not merely to reduce stroke count, but also to improve the phonemic transparency of the script by selecting variants whose phonetic elements more reliably signaled pronunciation under the newly adopted Modern Standard Chinese ("Guoyu," later "Putonghua"). Many of the variants proposed during the Republic (1912-49) were officially adopted in the PRC Script Reform of the 1950s and '60s.

However, why were there so many different reform ideas? Why were some characters chosen for their sound and others for their shape? What role did the phonetic or semantic components of the characters play in school teaching—especially given the fact that a standard language based on Beijing Mandarin was being promoted from the 1920s onwards? Which actors were behind promoting different script concepts and what influence did they exert on language textbooks? This paper addresses these questions with a focus on but not limited to the Republican Era by taking philologists' writings on graphemics, school textbooks and teachers' handbooks as sources.

**Florian Keßler (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg),** – *Parallelism in Chinese Mathematics – A Digital Approach*

Parallelism is one of the most distinctive features of classical Chinese writing and is found across a variety of genres. As I demonstrate in this study, this includes an understudied genre, pre modern Chinese mathematical texts. The study employs a digital methodology inspired by computational biology which works by computing textual alignments of procedures to automatically identify and cluster cases of parallelism in procedures extracted from the texts. The results of applying this method to a corpus containing works from the 1st century CE to the late Qing show that a certain type of parallelism, characterised by verbatim repetition of significant sections of text in parallel structures, was widespread in this genre and was often used to structure related procedures in a rigid way, giving the text a degree of artificiality. As with most computational approaches for pre modern Chinese, the methodology takes Chinese characters (Hanzi 漢字) as the most basic unit of processing. Interpreting parallelisms as establishing relationships both between both shared and differing characters between the constituent procedures, the parallelisms can be analysed in a novel way, by computing statistics of which characters are often shared in parallel procedures, and which differ. Doing so, I show that this stylistic device was used to highlight the common structure of related procedures, thus forming an important way of expressing the general applicability of mathematical knowledge.

**Yixiang Li (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)** – *Inventing the "Chinese Alphabet:" Script Technicality and Chinese Typewriting in the Age of the QWERTY Keyboard*

In the second half of the twentieth century, Chinese writing had to overcome the most fundamental barrier to build its mechanical literacy: typewriting with keyboard. This paper examines the reforms of Chinese orthography to fit ideograms into the Latin-based QWERTY keyboard, focusing on the tension between the preservation of Chinese characters' ideographic nature and the pursuit of script technicity—the former was considered to be a hindrance to the latter while the QWERTY keyboard became a standard tool for digital input. I use the term "script technicity" to describe how the QWERTY keyboard, which was originally designed for alphabetic writing, solidifies a set of techno-linguistic premises rooted in alphabetic writing and defines 'normal' relationship between orthography and technology. By tracing the concept of "character root" (zigen) through Chinese character decomposition schemes––from Ding U Doo's and Zheng Yili's character indexing systems through Hsieh Ching-Chun's "character root" computer keyboard to Chu Bong-Foo's Cangjie input method and "Chinese-writing computer" (zhongwen diannao)—this paper demonstrates how the pursuit of information modernity by Chinese intellectuals was shaped by an inquiry for a "standard Chinese alphabet" that can compose every Chinese character and, thus, make them typable on a QWERTY keyboard. Although the character root was developed against such context, it eventually opened a new possibility for Chu Bong-Foo to re-invent computer for Chinese writing. This paper emphasizes the uneasy trade-off between linguistic identity and script modernity, through which Chinese information engineers reformed the ideographic structure of Chinese character for a digital future.

**Andreas Guder (Free University of Berlin)** – *Getting acquainted with 2000 Hanzi: A database of etymographic knowledge-bites as a support for building an individual (meta-)cognitive character network*

Research in learning psychology and language learning shows that adult learners acquire new elements more easily when they can be linked to existing knowledge. This network model applies not only to learning lexical morphemes in European languages (in European language learning research known as "multilingual approach") or to the learning of Chinese complex words with the help of morphemic knowledge, but also to the graphic components of Chinese characters: Functional reading and writing skills require knowledge of approximately 1500-2000 characters, making the character system the "third dimension" of Chinese language acquisition (linguistic and cultural features being the other two, Guder 2009) and a special challenge in Chinese language teaching, as for beginners the characters are often perceived as rather arbitrary. Ke (1998) and many others already found that learners rate using character components as more effective than simply rote learning, but traditional CFL courses often overlook the important role of the learner's L1 in acquiring the relevant metalinguistic knowledge: This project presents a didactic concept for the systematic development of reduced, scientifically based short descriptions for Chinese characters and their components for analytical learners. Based on a frequency analysis of written Chinese texts (Da 2005) and etymographic research on the origin of characters (e.g. Qiu 2000, CUHK, and other relevant platforms), this online project gives mnemonic explanations of more than 2,000 most frequent characters in condensed form in the learner's L1. With its focus on etymographic references, functional components, and memorable structural features, it supports the learner in developing an individual cognitive network of the Chinese character system with the help of his/her mother tongue.

[1001] Sijia Cheng (University of Erlangen-Nuremberg). *Counting Social Pathologies in Republican China.*
**Abstract.** This paper investigates the rise and fall of the statistics on social pathologies (shehui bingtai tongji) as a field of knowledge and administrative practice in Republican China. Starting in late 1920s, the local Social Affairs Bureau in numerous cities across the country embarked on new census and survey projects to produce statistical data on social phenomena such as suicide, divorce, robbery, disaster, police contravention and prostitution, etc. Being put under the category of social pathology, these statistics were widely discussed by intellectuals and governmental authorities as indicators of social problems and yardsticks for social reforms and changes. Drawing evidence from statistical publications, municipal archives and miscellaneous writings produced by Chinese sociologists, economists, political elites and statistical practitioners, this paper shows that the production and propagation of numerical data on these so-called social pathologies created new ways of identifying, classifying and interpretating the abnormal and irregular people and their behaviors in modern China. By situating the birth and disappearance of this particular statistical category in administrative practices on both local and national levels, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the entanglement between the quantification of social facts and nation-building objectives in the Republican era.
**Keywords:** social pathology, statistics, data, quantification, social facts, Republican China

[1002] Lilia Chapon (Inalco - IFRAE). *Rewritings of Formosan Folktales in Contemporary Taiwanese Fiction*
**Abstract.** In the last decade, we have observed a revival of Taiwanese folklore through the works of several authors like He Jingyao 何敬堯 and the members of the Taipei Legend Studio (Taibei difang yiwen gongzuoshi 臺北地方異聞工作室). This has been the case through projects like the publication of anthologies and compilations of Formosan folktales, as well as the publis-hing of several novels and short stories incorporating said folklore. While some articles on the historical evolution of particular tales exist, very few take an interest in their contempo-rary rewritings. Our main focus in this paper, taking one of He's Port of Illusions' (Huan zhi gang 幻之港) short stories as an example, will on one hand be to determine how historic fol-klore is preserved in contemporary literary works, and on the other hand to analyse how the author reimagines and modernises this material to incorporate it into a work of fiction. Through the comparison of historical and fictional sources, and a literary analysis of the short story, this paper argues that such fictional works serve a double purpose of preservation and diffusion of significant local folktales to a new generation of readers.
**Keywords:** Folklore, Tales, Rewriting, Taiwanese Literature

[1005] Shiyu Yang (University College London). *Ports in North China and Interregional Maritime Trade during the Song and Jin Dynasties.*
**Abstract.** Ports were pivotal parts of the Maritime Silk Roads which extended from East Asia to the Mediterranean, serving as active mediators of maritime exchange between production and consumption sites across Afro-Eurasia. China's maritime trade increased rapidly during the Song dynasty (960-1279), manifested particularly in the export of ceramics, but also in copper coins, silks, etc. While port cities in southern China attract considerable attention among academics and the broader public, the significance of northern ports in long-distance exchange has been partially recognised.

The paper deploys case studies of three key ports in North China - Banqiao Town of Mizhou, Haibei Site, and Haifeng Town - to explore interregional maritime trade during the Northern Song (960-1127) and Jin (1115-1234) dynasties. Goryeo (918-1392) people were the main target consumers, but direct or indirect interactions with Japan, West Asia, East Africa, and Europe could also been found through archaeological finds and historical sources. This paper examines the ceramics, coins, and other goods unearthed in these ports and investigates how different types of wares, copper coins, and silks were transported from production areas through ports in North China to wider territories across the oceans. It argues that Banqiao Town, Haibei Site and Haifeng Town thrived successively and operated complementarily to sustain a multi-tiered port system in North China for intraregional transshipment and overseas trade from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries. The research offers a fresh perspective on how China's maritime trade extended into regions (and the Jin period) often overlooked in existing scholarship.
**Keywords:** Ports in North China, Maritime Trade, Interregional exchange, Northern Song Dynasty, Jin Dynasty, Maritime Silk Roads

[1008] Haoyang Zhao (Courtauld Institute of Art), Kexin Ma (Courtauld Institute of Art) and Shuhua Tang (University College London). *Reframing the Early Provenance and Reception of Chinese Art in the West in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries.*

**Abstract.** This panel examines how Chinese art reached the West between the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, at a time before specialist dealerships, collectors, academic frameworks and stable trade networks for Chinese art had been widely established. Through innovative investigations into understudied sources and new methodological perspectives, the panel reframes the circulation, collecting practices and social reception of 'Chinese art' in this period.

The papers focus on overlooked sources, including rare-book trade, medical professionals and underexplored exhibitions, and deploy digital tools to reconstruct patterns of acquisition and display. One paper examines how paintings originally made for the domestic Chinese market were circulated in the rare book trade as 'drawings' and 'manuscripts' in the UK in the nineteenth century. A second investigates doctors collecting Chinese objects within the overlapping worlds of medical practice, social prestige and global mobility. A third re-examines two little-studied exhibitions of Asian art at the Musée Cernuschi in Paris, showing how displays and their lenders shaped early understandings of Chinese art in France. The final paper applies digital humanities methods, including computer-assisted image analysis, to a corpus of Chinese export watercolours, tracing workshop patterns and acquisition histories in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Guided by previously overlooked materials and new approaches, these case studies show how cataloguing, trading in and displaying artworks from China contributed to the early formation of the category of 'Chinese art' and its reception(s), and how marginal or cross-disciplinary materials and approaches shed new light on early provenances where records are often limited.

**Keywords:** Chinese art, Provenance research, History of collecting, Exhibitions and display, Digital humanities

**Haoyang Zhao (The Courtauld Institute of Art)** – *From paintings to manuscripts and drawings, early circulation of Chinese paintings in the nineteenth-century British rare-book trade*

This presentation investigates the early circulation of Chinese paintings, particularly works made for the domestic Chinese market, within the overlooked channel of British rare-book trade networks in the nineteenth century, reframing the early history of Chinese painting in Britain as part of the rare-book trade rather than the antique market. This channel was first identified through provenance research on a looted Qing imperial album, which revealed that some imperially commissioned illustrations were circulated via rare-book dealers, auctions and manuscript collectors, rather than through, as is often assumed, antique dealers and collectors in mid to late nineteenth-century Britain. Building on this lead, a broader survey of rare-book dealers' catalogues, auction records and museum records suggests that a number of paintings, understood today as works for the domestic Chinese market, arrived in the UK and circulated within this niche market, prior to the formal academic study and publication of this material, which only began in the following century. Drawing on catalogues and related documentation associated with several key figures, including rare-book dealer Bernard Quaritch Ltd, the publisher and dealer Henry George Bohn, auction house Puttick & Simpson and the manuscript collector Sir Thomas Phillipps, the presentation examines how Chinese paintings originally made for the domestic market were classified and interpreted, and how these materials were understood within this trade. It also investigates whether these paintings were perceived differently from the watercolours produced in port cities for the export market, thereby reassessing the place of Chinese painting within nineteenth-century British collecting and book-trade practices.

**Kexin Ma (The Courtauld Institute of Art)** – *'Diagnosing' Art: Medical Practitioners and Their Chinese Art Collections*

In 1836, the American missionary ophthalmologist Peter Parker (1804–1888) commissioned the Canton painter Lam Qua (1801–60) to create a series of portraits of patients with unusual pathological conditions.

Having exhibited his assemblage of Lam Qua's portraits in the US and eventually donated them to the Yale Medical School, Parker was arguably one of the earliest physician-collectors of Chinese art, forming a collection of 'medical curiosities' that reflected his missionary agenda and clinical interests. Yet, existing literature on European and American collectors of Chinese art has seldom addressed physicians as a distinct group, as most scholarship has cantered on more conventional collector types, including diplomats, businessmen, archaeologists, ethnographers, and museum curators.

This paper, thus, examines the practices of collecting Chinese art among a selection of physicians who travelled and worked internationally from the late 19th to the early 20th century. To uncover the mechanisms through which these individuals accumulated their collections, the paper aims to explore the patterns embedded in their collecting behaviours and the ways their professional and social networks—both within and beyond China—shaped their

acquisition criteria and strategies. In turn, the paper also traces these physicians' involvement in the organization of Chinese art exhibitions abroad, particularly their roles as committee members, lenders, etc. Through this lens, the current research seeks to shed light on the interdisciplinary nature of collecting and the role of physicians' collections in reshaping connoisseurship discourses, scholarly inquiries, and exhibition practices related to Chinese art in an era of global interactions.

**Shuhua Tang, Jin Gao, and Isobel Macdonald (UCL)** – *From Creation to Collection: Visualising the Provenance of the Chinese Export Watercolours at the Victoria and Albert Museum*

Chinese Export Watercolours (CEW), produced for Western markets in the 18th and 19th centuries, document everyday life, material culture and cross-cultural encounters in Qing China. The V&A holds the world's largest collection of CEW, yet major questions remain about who created these artworks and how they entered the museum. This paper examines who supplied these works, how shifting structures shaped their acquisition, and how computational methods might help address the challenge of artist attribution. A quantitative analysis of departmental registers shows that booksellers dominated the trade in CEW prior to 1900. Only after the establishment of a Far Eastern Section in 1970 did specialist dealers in Chinese art begin to contribute, marking a shift in the status of CEW. The analysis also reveals a sharply uneven supplier landscape: although 35 vendors and donors contributed CEW between 1871 and 1990, nearly three-quarters of the works came from a handful of major suppliers. Yet, when examined through 'acquisition events' rather than object volume, the role of small but persistent actors – non-specialist dealers engaged in repeated, low-scale transactions – comes into view, challenging assumptions about who mattered in shaping the collection. Treating large-scale provenance records as data moves beyond object-by-object reconstruction and makes visible acquisition patterns that traditional methods overlook. To address the parallel challenge of anonymous authorship, the study also implements computer vision to identify recurrent compositional templates associated with workshop production, providing a scalable means of reconnecting fragmented authorship within the V&A's CEW collection and, potentially, across institutions.

[1009] Xinghua Zhou (Hunan University& Heidelberg University). *An Interior Frontier: Mortuary Practice and Identity Formation in the Three Gorges Region during the Six Dynasties.*

**Abstract.** The Six Dynasties period (222–589 CE) marked a protracted era of fragmentation following the unified Qin–Han empires, during which northern and southern regimes remained divided and in prolonged confrontation for more than three centuries. The weakening of central authority disrupted and diminished the Huaxia sociopolitical network at its political margins, while non-Han groups expanded their influence. Focusing on the Three Gorges region—a mountainous corridor linking the Sichuan Basin and the middle Yangzi plains in Southwest China, long recognized as a space resistant to deep imperial penetration and active with non-Han communities—this study examines non-Han elements in mortuary contexts. Through close analysis of grave goods that reveal long-distance exchange networks, the emergence of novel modes of bodily adornment, and transformations in funerary patterning, and in dialogue with transmitted texts, the paper proposes a new interpretation of indigenous social developments and the mechanisms of identity construction in the Three Gorges during the Six Dynasties.

**Keywords:** Six Dynasties, Three Gorges Region, Non-Han Elements, Identity Construction

[1010] Qibu Luo (City University of Hong Kong), Zhimo Li (Heidelberg University), Ying-Jhen Wu (Nanjing University/National Chung Hsing University) and Yuichi Kashikura (Hosei University). *Reinterpreting the Southern Periphery: Indigenous People, Local Institutions, and Material Life in Early Chinese Empires.*

**Abstract.** This panel combines archaeological, legal, and administrative perspectives to examine how different regimes governed, taxed, and colonized in the southern East Asia from the mid–Warring States through the Western Han. In doing so, four papers can be considered as adopting microhistorical approach and a longue durée perspective at the same time, and thereby position cases within a larger historical context and geographical dimension. Yuichi Kashikura reconstructs the local governance system of the Chu in the mid–Warring States period on the basis of excavated Baoshan Chu manuscripts. By clarifying the structure and interrelations of Chu administrative units, it offers a crucial non-Qin model against which the later jun-xian system can be compared. LUO Qibu utilized cemeteries along the You and Wu Rivers, to trace indigenous population movements and territorial control before Qin empire's penetration in western Hunan. Li Zhimo analyzes the "Statutes on Manyi" (Man Yi Lü) excavated from Hujia Caochang and a case study of Cong tax collection from Zoumalou manuscripts, to reassess taxation practices and legal categorization of Southern Manyi groups, situating high and differentiated tax burdens within broader dynamics of monetary depreciation and payment in kind. Wu Ying-jhen concentrates on Han tombs in the former Nanyue capital of Panyu to chart changes in burial organization and Yue-style material

culture after conquest, revealing how imperial incorporation reshaped local social structures and patterns of migration. By integrating textual and archaeological records, the panel sheds new light on the making of imperial order in the south, the agency of indigenous people, and the negotiated transformation of frontier societies under Chu, Qin, and Han rule.

**Keywords:** Excavated Manuscripts, Indigenous people, Qin and Han Empire, Southern Barbarians

**Yuichi Kashikura (Hosei University)** – *The Local Governance System of the Chu Kingdom in the MidWarring States Period*

The Qin and Han empires perfected the system of local administration known as the jun-xian (郡県) system, which was subsequently adopted by later Chinese dynasties. However, the administrative systems of the preceding Warring States period—particularly those of the six states other than Qin—remain poorly understood due to the scarcity of historical sources. In my previous research, I used excavated documents known as the Baoshan (包山) Chu slips as primary materials to reconstruct the local administrative units of the Chu Kingdom—one of the six states in the mid-Warring States period—and to clarify their characteristics and interrelations. Building on these findings, this paper aims to elucidate the overall structure of Chu's local governance system and to compare it with the jun-xian (郡県) system of the Qin and Han.

**Qibu Luo (City University of Hong Kong)** – *The Forgotten Continuity: the Marginalized Qianling and Western Hunan before the Qin Conquest (277 – 222 BCE)*

In 276 BCE, only one year after Zhang Ruo led Qin armies across the Yangtze into Chu territory, Chu recaptured the "Fifteen Settlements along the River" in western Hunan and established the Dongting Commandery, confronting Qin's Wuqianzhong Commandery in the Wu River and Fuling regions. It was not until 222 BCE that the You River valley finally came under the colonization of the Qin Empire. During this intervening half-century, crucial questions regarding how Chu administered this periphery and how Qin's brief occupation influenced Chu's defensive strategy have often been overlooked because of the scarcity of transmitted texts. This study examines three cemeteries located along the You River, Wu River, and Yuan River to to reconstruct forms of territorial control and social life in western Hunan before the Qin empire, as a large military apparatus, established its rule there, including Maicha in Liye, Xiaotianxi in Fuling, and Yaotou in Yuanling. The notably fewer weapons excavated in the Chu tombs at Maicha, compared to those at Yaotou, may reflect the Qin's lightning war that advanced deep along the Yuan River to Xupu in its upper reaches prompted Chu to reorganize its defensive arrangements in the You River valley, in response to emerging governance crises. Furthermore, by incorporating the Liye Qin slips and the Yuelu Qin slips, this paper argues that the Wu River and You River valleys were not entirely isolated by the Wuling Mountains, challenging the limitations of an overemphasis on administrative boundaries in understanding micro exchanges.

**Zhimo Li (Heidelberg University)** – *A Study of the Taxation Practices and the Application of the Statutes on Manyi (Man Yi Lü) in the Southern Man Regions during the Early and Middle Western Han Periods*

The Statutes on Manyi (Man Yi Lü) from HujiaCaochang and the "Case of Xiangren" in the Western Han bamboo manuscripts from Zoumalou, Changsha, are roughly contemporaneous and represent two distinct aspects of Han governance over the Southern Manyi (Nanman). The former reflects legal provisions formulated for these groups, while the latter depicts the social and economic realities of their daily life. Although these sources appear comparable, an examination of the taxation clauses in the Statutes on Manyi, alongside records of Cong tax collection in the "Case of Xiangren", shows that they do not corroborate each other. Furthermore, stipulations related to the Statutes on Manyi in the Zhangjiashan "Case of Wuyou" reveal significant temporal changes. Building on this, the article first discusses the Western Han government's differentiated provisions for the Cong tax, distinguishing between household and head taxes introduced at different stages for groups with varying social structures and degrees of administrative control. Secondly, by analyzing the recorded tax amounts, it uncovers the economic logic behind the high tax standards shown in the "Case of Xiangren", situating them within broader trends of currency depreciation, price fluctuations, and the shift toward payments in kind. Overall, using taxation as an analytical lens, this study reconsiders legal practices and economic governance in the Southern Manyi regions during the early and middle Western Han period, offering deeper insight into the empire's targeted strategies and multi-layered interactions in governing non-Han groups.

**Ying-Jhen Wu (Nanjing University/ National Chung Hsing University)** – *The Transformation of Southern Frontier Societies in the Qin and Han Empires: A Study Centered on Han Tombs in the Panyu Region*

During the mid–Western Han period, Emperor Wu launched a southern campaign against the Nanyue Kingdom located on the empire's southern frontier. The ruling Zhao clan and the local Yue elite lineages suffered severe setbacks. After the fall of Nanyue, its capital city Panyu was taken over by the Han court and established as the seat

of Nanhai Commandery. Archaeological evidence shows that certain cemeteries only began to be used from the mid–Western Han period onward, and the tombs exhibit nearly uniform specifications—unlike in the Nanyue period, when large-scale burials and the mixed interment of lower officials were common. Previous scholars have pointed out that this phenomenon reflects, indirectly, Panyu's decline from a political center to a subordinate locality. This paper further examines changes in the organization of the population in the Panyu core area after the fall of Nanyue through an analysis of the identities of tomb occupants. From the perspective of spatial distribution, the excavated burial goods indicate that Yue-style ritual artifacts commonly included in Nanyue-period burials almost completely disappeared after the mid–Western Han, reappearing only in the late Western Han period; meanwhile, the number of certain typical Yue-style objects increased significantly. By analyzing the spatial contexts of the tombs and the assemblages of grave goods, this study not only reveals the transformation of the southern frontier into a new political and social landscape under Han imperial rule, but also sheds light on the migration of Yue peoples and their interactions with local populations.

[1012] Sinan Chu (German Institute for Global and Area Studies), Gang Li (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg) and Valentina Punzi (EPHE-PSL/CRCAO). *Technology of Governance in China's Nationality Policy: Surveillance, Minoritization, Cadre Recruitment, and Ethnic Classification.*

**Abstract.** Recent years have seen increased interest in China's ethnic politics, partly due to the high-profile Sinicization campaign targeting Turkic Muslim communities in China's northwestern region. The international media exposure of this campaign and other repressive practices by the Chinese government toward its ethnic minority population has led to significantly reduced access to information on the topic, which urgently needs scholarly attention. This is important not only because of the serious implications of those policies for the affected communities but also because of the complex and multifaceted nature of the policies themselves. This panel includes four studies on different aspects of China's nationality policy in the contemporary period, including the use of surveillance networks in the Sinicization campaign targeting Muslim communities across China, the political reconfiguration of Islam through minorization, the recruitment of ethnic minority cadres to serve the party-state, and the ethnic (re)classification in the Eastern Tibetan area. Besides the diverse spatial, temporal, and thematic focuses, these papers also highlight different research methods for studying nationality policy and ethnic politics in modern China, such as digital ethnography, open-source online data collection, and official documents released to the public by the party-state. As a result, the panel aims to promote not only discussions about various aspects of China's governance towards its ethnic minorities but also conversations about different research methods and their implications for future studies.

**Keywords:** ethnic politics, nationality policy, sinicization, minoritization, surveillance, Islam, Tibetan

**Gang Li (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg)** – *Minoritization as Governance: Rethinking Ethnic Policy Through the CCP's Political Reconfiguration of Islam*

This paper examines the historical evolution of the Chinese Communist Party's governance of Islam as a vantage point to reassess the foundational logics and operational modalities of ethnic politics in the People's Republic of China. It argues that the Party-State's management of diversity has long oscillated between accommodationist and assimilationist impulses—mobilizing selective recognition of difference while simultaneously advancing homogenizing projects of nation-building. This dual strategy, I suggest, is neither contradictory nor episodic but constitutes a coherent repertoire through which the party-state calibrates its authority over culturally and religiously marked populations. This paper conceptualizes "minoritization" as an ongoing state-making project—an active and recursive mode of governance that continually restructures religious life, institutional landscapes, and communal identities to align with shifting political priorities. Drawing on policy documents, local regulatory regimes, and ethnographic observations, the study traces how the CCP's contemporary reconfiguration of Islam generates new contours of legality, loyalty, and cultural legibility. In doing so, the state seeks to hollow out the epistemic and moral autonomy of Muslim identity, treating religious orthodoxy as a potential rival to political allegiance. The analysis contends that ethnic and religious policy in contemporary China is part of a broader ideological project aimed at recasting Islam into an administratively legible and politically compliant formation. I argue that these governance strategies offer a blueprint for a form of Chinese nationalism in which ethnic and religious distinctions are tolerated only to the extent that they are subordinated to the telos of the "Community of the Chinese Nation."

**Valentina Punzi (EPHE-PSL/CRCAO) and Sinan Chu (German Institute for Global and Area Studies)** – *Othering within Minzu: the peripheral Tibetanness of Baima*

Baima is a community of ten thousand people living in eastern Gansu and northern Sichuan. During the state's ethnic identification in the 1950s, PRC scholars classified Baima as Tibetan based on linguistic documentation and ethno-historical reconstruction. Members of the community contend that they have been denied recognition as a separate, distinctive ethnic group and have repeatedly attempted to challenge the state's classificatory decision since the 1970s. Tibetan scholars, on the other hand, have adamantly defended classifying Baima as part of Tibetan. For the latter, although this small group is peripheral in both geographical and cultural terms — scattered along the north-eastern fringes of the Tibetan Plateau and at the margins of Tibetan imperial history and Buddhism — it does not constitute a different group. In this paper, we retrace the debate surrounding Baima's classification from the 1970s onward, with particular emphasis on the intervention of Tibetan scholars in response to Baima's petitions for reclassification. By doing so, the paper examines how Tibetan scholars utilize state ethnotaxonomy to defend the geographic scope of their "imagined Tibetan community", which encompasses communities like Baima that have historically resided in its periphery. We argue that the inclusion of Baima reflects a supposedly hierarchical Tibetan identity, against which the peripheral Tibetanness of Baima produced simultaneously its Other-ness within both the Chinese state and the "Tibetan community". The Baima case shows that although the ethnic classification was a state-endorsed othering practice, it didn't serve the state's interests in isolation but was appropriated by "the classified" themselves.

[1014] Kristin Shi-Kupfer (Trier University) and Tilman Schalmey (Trier University). *Beyond the Party-state line on Europe? Evolving narratives on the Chinese Q&A platform Zhihu.*

**Abstract.** Collapsing social order, backwardness in digital technologies, and a normative hybris – the Chinese party-state has been pushing narratives of Europe in decline to highlight its own strengths, both among countries of the Global South as well as its own populace.

While much scholarly attention has focused on the state-mediated, propagandistic representations of Europe, comparatively little is known about how ordinary Chinese netizens construct, contest, and transform perceptions of Europe in online discussions as well as efforts of the Chinese party-state to penetrate those debates.

Drawing on a dataset of Zhihu questions and answers related to Europe from 2021 to 2025, we employ a mixed-methods approach combining corpus linguistics, machine-learning-based narrative analyses as well as qualitative close reading of dominant narratives.

Our analysis will identify and analyze key narrative clusters about Europe (EU, member states, core neighbors). We will dive into various topical domains (e. g. geopolitics, technology, economy, society and culture) and attitudes of both the authors of questions as well as related answers. This study will particularly focus on uncovering specific mechanisms of shaping debates by the Chinese party-state, covering a full spectrum from direct influence via questions to infusing agitating language. By mapping these evolving narratives, the paper argues that Zhihu functions as a semi-autonomous arena in which public perceptions of Europe are negotiated rather than passively received. Understanding these multi-linear dynamics offers insight into the limitations and opportunities of European soft power in China and enriches broader debates on digital public opinion in authoritarian contexts.

**Keywords:** China, Europe, Social media, Political communication, Narratives, Discourse, Digital humanities, LLM, Machine-based learning, Python

[1016] Cong Wan (Waseda University). *Making Arthouse Film Festival in China: The Practice and Challenges of Jia Zhangke and Pingyao International Film Festival.*

**Abstract.** This research examines the establishment and evolution of the Pingyao International Film Festival (PYIFF) as an effort to build a sustainable arthouse platform within China's rapidly transforming film landscape. Founded by internationally acclaimed filmmaker Jia Zhangke, PYIFF positions itself as a bridge between global art cinema and China's emerging filmmakers while operating under the constraints of cultural policy, market pressures, and shifting forms of state regulation. Through an analysis of PYIFF's vision, programming structure, and curatorial practices, including screening sections such as "Crouching Tigers" and "Hidden Dragons" and its industry-oriented initiatives such as pitching forums, this study explores how the festival balances its two main aims of supporting artistic independence and adapting to an increasingly commercialized film environment.

By situating PYIFF within China's post-independent cinema era, this research further considers the practical strategies, institutional challenges, and cultural ambitions embedded in Jia Zhangke's festival-making endeavor. Ultimately, this study argues that PYIFF reveals both the possibilities and limitations of building an arthouse film

festival in contemporary China, offering insight into how cinema, industry, and politics intersect in the country's evolving festival ecology.
**Keywords:** Pingyao International Film Festival, Jia Zhangke, Chinese cinema, Post-independent cinema era

[1017] Chang Xu (Ph.D. candidate jointly trained by Sun Yat-sen University and Heidelberg University). *Locality, Embodiment, and Hybridity: Medical Knowledge and Practice in Postcolonial Macau.*
**Abstract.** Traditional Chinese medicine is a knowledge system about life phenomena and patterns of illness formed through embodied practices and long-term interactions with specific climates, geographical environments, and historical traditions. Existing research on Chinese medicine in Macau has largely focused on medical techniques, historical trajectories, and policy applications, with relatively little attention paid to how bodily experience and everyday practice shape local health knowledge. Examined through local narratives of "yeet hay" (hot air), both Chinese and Macanese（multiracial East Asian ethnic group） residents perceive and manage this condition by treating the body as an active agent continuously interacting with local climate, dietary structures, and socio-historical contexts. This perspective reveals a mode of knowledge interaction distinct from that of typical colonial settings. Such forms of "health" not only influence people's daily dietary choices but also shape their lifestyles, consumption behaviours, and patterns of engagement with the natural environment.
**Keywords:** Traditional Chinese Medicine, Embodiment, Local Health Knowledge, Yeet Hay, Macau, Macaense

[1019] Andrea Scibetta (University for Foreigners of Siena), Davide Francolino (University for Foreigners of Siena), Fabiana Marchioro (University of Milano-Bicocca), Francesca Lupia (European University Institute) and Waffa Nekka (Université de Bordeaux). *Multilingual Lives and Transnational Schooling: Comparative Perspectives on Chinese Heritage Language Education.*
**Abstract.** Chinese heritage language (CHL) education has become an increasingly significant field of study (cf. Yan, Guo, and Pan 2011, Yan, Bao, and Zheng 2015, Brigadoi Cologna, 2023, Pellin, 2025), bringing together interdisciplinary aspects involving transformations in global mobility, transnational family life, bi-multilingual education and bi-multiliteracy development. In other words, CHL education emerges not only as a domain concerned with language maintenance, but also as a key space in which belonging, identity, and educational opportunity are negotiated (Francolino, and Scibetta, 2025, Rizzuto, 2025).
This panel explores CHL education through comparative, ethnographic, and sociological lenses, examining how pedagogical practices, institutional language policies, peer networks, and family beliefs and expectations shape students' experiences across diverse contexts. By focusing on both instructional settings and young people's subjective trajectories, the panel highlights how heritage language learning interacts with wider processes of identity formation, education, and transnational life. The contributions collectively argue for a shift away from "deficit-based/minoritizing framings" toward an understanding of CHL learners as multilingual actors whose competencies, resources, and agency are shaped by interconnected educational systems in Europe and China.
The four papers offer complementary perspectives: a comparative study of Huaqiao Ban in Zhejiang and Huawen Xuexiao in Italy; an ethnographic analysis of Chinese transnational youth navigating Italian schools; a mixed-methods examination of peer networks and academic outcomes among Chinese-Italian middle school students; and an investigation into identity formation and educational experiences among second-generation Chinese descendants in France. Together, they shed light on the complexity and diversity of CHL education across contemporary transnational contexts.
**Keywords:** Chinese heritage language education, Transnational students/children, Identity negotiation, Intercultural networks, Academic experience

**Andrea Scibetta (University for Foreigners Siena) and Davide Francolino (University for Foreigners Siena)** – *Chinese language education, curriculum planning and teaching specificities across Huaqiao ban in Zhejiang and Huawen Xuexiao in Italy*
This paper aims to shed light on a comparative analysis involving Chinese language education among Huaqiao Ban 华侨班 in Zhejiang Province and Huawen Xuexiao 华文学校 in Italy. Specifically, the former are here referred to as Chinese schools (public and private) with a variable component of students with Chinese origin, whose families are involved in transnational migration. The latter, instead, refers to Chinese Heritage Language learners schools outside China (Li, 2023; Brigadoi Cologna, 2023). The present study is conceived as a part of the Italian project of national interest ECCO-Italy, the main purpose of which is to investigate aspects related to education, teaching methods, identity aspects and issues of language policy in Huawen Xuexiao in Italy. A further part of the project is

dedicated to gathering information about Chinese language education addressed to similar target students attending schools in Zhejiang (i.e., an underestimated issue in international research). A comparative analysis of both settings was carried out according to a corpus of audio-recordings of interviews conducted in Chinese with principals and teachers of five Huawen Xuexiao located in Central and Northern Italy and five Huaqiao Ban located in Zhejiang Province. A specific focus in the analysis was dedicated to curriculum planning, educational methods, instructional materials and intertwining points between Chinese language education and linguistic identity formation. The interviews were analyzed by means of and Qualitative Content Analysis (Mayring, 2020) criteria, using the QCAmap software. The analysis opens new pathways in order to understand the complexity of transnational Chinese language education.

**Fabiana Marchioro (University of Milano-Bicocca)** – *Growing Up Across Borders: School Experiences of Chinese Transnational Youth in Italy*

This paper presents an ongoing ethnographic and biographical study on the school experiences of young adults of Chinese origin who grew up between China and Italy. The project focuses on individuals who experienced a transnational childhood (cf. Baldassar et al., 2007; Gao & Sacchetto, 2024; Lamas-Abraira, 2019, 2023; Liu et al., 2017; Wen, 2014) having spent significant periods of their early years in the Zhejiang province before reuniting with their parents in Italy, and examines their experiences within the Italian school system (cf. Ardizzoni & Omodeo, 2022; Costantini, 2023; Paciocco, 2018). Drawing on semi-structured biographical interviews (Bichi, 2022; Merrill & West 2009) with Chinese transnational young adults (currently still being collected), the study explores how linguistic, educational, and relational transitions are experienced and interpreted by the participants. Particular attention is devoted to themes such as inclusion and exclusion dynamics, peer relationships, language learning, and the negotiation of cultural and linguistic identities. The paper also discusses the methodological choices guiding the research, including a multi-sited ethnographic approach (Della Puppa, 2024) between Italy and China, with a strong emphasis on young people's voices (Lundy, 2007), and an ecological perspective that integrates both family and school contexts. Preliminary reflections highlight the need to move beyond deficit-based interpretations of Chinese transnational students' school performances and to recognize transnational resources, adaptive capacities, and forms of agency that emerge throughout their life trajectories. Finally, the contribution aims to open a broader discussion on how schools can more effectively respond to the complexity of transnational biographies by promoting more inclusive and culturally sensitive educational practices.

**Francesca Lupia (European University Institute)** – *Intercultural Networks Across Contexts: How Peer and Co-ethnic Community Characteristics Influence Chinese-Italian Student Outcomes*

Despite extensive research on how origin group and destination country characteristics shape immigrant student outcomes, the effect of native students' educational results on their immigrant-origin classmates remains understudied. The current paper introduces a mixed-methods study, which examines the effect of interpersonal network structure and composition on the school performance, experiences and decisions of Chinese-Italian middle school students. In particular, it aims to explore how native peer academic performance influences the effect of inter- and co-ethnic social ties on immigrant-origin student performance. It will also test the hypothesis that the academic effects of being embedded in a more homogeneous co-ethnic network vary depending on native peer performance, hindering Chinese-origin student success in contexts where natives do well academically and encouraging it in contexts where natives do poorly (Borjas, 1992; Lee, 2016). Semi-structured interviews with student participants (seventh- and eighth-grade students of Chinese immigrant or second-generation origin) are supplemented with an interactive network mapping exercise to elicit information about significant interpersonal ties. Participating students' classroom instructors are also interviewed about their perceptions of Chinese-origin students' interpersonal networks and school trajectories. Fieldwork sites include multiple public middle schools across four Italian cities – Prato, Bologna, Naples, and Sassari – that vary in non-immigrant-origin and Chinese-origin student performance.

[1020] Sascha Klotzbücher (Comenius University in Bratislava). *Mourning as Protest: Ritualized Resistance in Contemporary China.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines medical disputes (医疗纠纷 yiliao jiufen) and "trouble-making" (闹 nao) protests in hospitals to analyze how people organize, perform, and articulate dissent. It focuses on the scripts, repertoires, and assigned roles within these "contentious performances" of hospital-based protests (闹医 naoyi or 医闹 yinao) staged by family members after medical accidents or deaths attributed to alleged malpractice.

Amid intensifying repression of public protest under Xi Jinping, demonstrators increasingly turn to socially accepted rituals to express grievance. Mourning practices have historically catalyzed collective action, as seen in the

Tiananmen Square demonstrations of 1976 and 1989. In contemporary cases, bereaved families protesting in hospitals find public expressions of grief tolerated only when framed as culturally legitimate mourning rituals.
These performances introduce a distinct mode of protest: the “mourning community” differentiates itself not by mobilizing outsiders but by enacting grief in a silent, passive, and politically safer form. Protest is not declared but performed through recognized symbols and gestures of mourning. Such rituals normalize the presence of a small, inward-facing group in public space, requiring no active recruitment yet sustaining collective identity under conditions where overt mobilization is suppressed. The ritual script provides participants with a respected framework to enact protest—even without spectators. For observers, the familiarity of mourning performances offers emotional and political safety, shielding them from confrontation. This dynamic will be explored through field studies in Shanghai and Anhui, alongside recent examples such as protests following the 2021 Zhengzhou flood disaster and the nationwide “White Paper Protests” sparked by the deadly Urumqi apartment fire.
**Keywords:** protest, collective action, medical disputes, hospitals

[1023] Maurizio Paolillo (University of Naples L'Orientale). *Tong Enzheng: The Past as a Memory of the Future in the Science-Fiction Writing of an Archaeologist.*
**Abstract.** “As an archaeologist by profession, I am drinking today’s wine, and writing stories about the future”. This sentence was pronounced during a convivial occasion by Tong Enzheng (1935–1997), one of the most important figures in 20th-century Chinese archaeology. As the author of the theory of a “crescent-shaped cultural-communication belt” (banyuexing wenhua chuanbodai 半月形文化傳播帶) stretching from Northeast China and Korea to Yunnan, Tong Enzheng remains an essential point of reference for archaeological studies, particularly for those interested in the role of south-western China in the possible transmission of cultural elements between the second and first millennia BCE. But Tong Enzheng was also a leading figure in Chinese science fiction between the second half of the 1950s and the 1980s. My talk will focus mainly on a part of Tong’s science fiction production, consisting of narratives directly inspired by his archaeological works. In particular, I will focus on the 1982 short novel “Song of the Stalagmites” (Shisun xing 石筍行, 1982). This novel clearly demonstrates the author’s ability to combine accounts of archaeological excavations with references to historical records, in order to provide science fiction hypotheses with scientific logic about alien visitors to our planet. I will show how the story makes use of objects that are part of the cultural and literary memory of the past, belonging to the conceptual field of the mirabilia in Chinese sources - in this case, stalagmites located outside the Western Gate of Chengdu, according to the Huayang guozhi, Du Fu’s Shisunxing and other sources - , to transform them into a symbol of the future, in a narrative framework that combines the sense of wonder typical of science fiction with an awareness of the limits of the human conception of time.
**Keywords:** Literature, Science-fiction, Archaeology

[1028] Andras Janos Teleki (National Chengchi University, IDAS Phd program (Taipei, ROC)). *Transnational Knowledge and Exile: László Ladányi and China Analysis in Cold War Hong Kong.*
**Abstract.** During the Cold War, Hong Kong was an important center for China analysis. The analyst community operating in Hong Kong included several influential members who have received little scholarly attention. One of these was László Ladányi, a Hungarian Jesuit who lived in Hong Kong. He wrote and edited China News Analysis. As an émigré intellectual, Ladányi offers an intriguing example: he was a Central European anti-communist émigré who worked within the Catholic Church and moved in American and Western European circles of China analysts, regularly publishing influential works on Chinese politics.
The study examines how Ladányi's ideas on People’s Republic of China were shaped by his experiences and knowledge of Eastern European socialism, as well as by the Anglo-American-oriented analytical milieu in Hong Kong. The research is based on archival materials from Taipei and Budapest, press materials, Ladányi's own publications, and interviews.The study draws on intellectual history, migration studies, and standpoint theory. It uses these to explore the connections between Ladányi’s knowledge of socialist systems in Eastern Europe, his experience of migration, the Western institutional environment, and Cold War discourse.
According to preliminary results, Ladányi analyzed Chinese politics, combining the communist experience of Hungary with the influence of the British and American expertise present in Hong Kong. The study highlights Hong Kong's underresearched role in shaping the Western image of China and contributes to a re-evaluation of the transnational history of Cold War knowledge production.
**Keywords:** László Ladányi, Cold War, Hong Kong, China analysis, Emigré intellectual

[1031] Daria Berg (University of St.Gallen) and Qian Cui (University of St. Gallen). *'War, the Anthropocene and its Discontents: Visual and Poetic Perceptions of Russia's War in Ukraine across the Taiwan Strait, 2022-Present'.*

**Abstract.** War counts among the Anthropocene's great discontents, yet voicing discontent about war demands courage. When Russia invaded Ukraine after sealing a 'no limits friendship' pact with China in February 2022, Chinese state media touted Russian propaganda while censoring Ukrainian news and perspectives. Trump's inward-looking dream to 'Make America Great Again', Putin's outward-looking dream of Russian imperialist expansion, and Xi Jinping's 'China Dream' with its global ambitions have upended the geopolitical order and turned into Taiwan's nightmares. Faced with the prospect of Taiwan as a new 'Ukraine scenario' and the looming spectre of war, the R.O.C. government and Taiwan's citizens have reiterated their stance to 'stand with Ukraine'. This study addresses the dearth of research about unofficial and cultural perceptions of Russia's war from both China and Taiwan. The Euripidean concept of parrhesia—'speaking truth to power'—denotes freedom of expression, transparency and duty, but also idle talk and gossip. Foucault (1983) has pointed out that truth-tellers face risk yet muster the courage to 'speak truth to power'. We examine how poets and artists across the Taiwan Strait, including Taiwan's Indigenous Peoples, cooperate with Ukrainian artists and debate Russia's war through alternative avenues and social media. Our analysis focuses on poems by Yang Xiaobin, Iverson Rangi, Liao Weitang, Deng Kangyan and Xi Yongjun, and artworks by Sean Wang, Cao Fei, Huang Rui, and Badiucao. This study aims to shed light on the new dreams, fears, and nightmares in the 'vernacular cultures' (Dudbridge, 1996) across the Taiwan Strait.

**Keywords:** Chinese poetry, Taiwanese poetry, Chinese visual art, Taiwanese visual art, Russia's war in Ukraine, political dissent, vernacular cultures

[1032] Qingyang Wang (Sichuan University). *Western Form, Eastern Charm: The Cross-Material Translation of Chinese Porcelain through Venetian Lattimo Glass.*

**Abstract.** This paper re-examines the lattimo (milk glass) produced on the island of Murano from the 15th to the 18th centuries as a material response to the circulation of Chinese porcelain in early modern Europe. Moving beyond interpretations of lattimo as a mere substitute or inferior imitation, this study argues that its production was shaped by a sustained negotiation between the European desire to reproduce the color and texture of porcelain and the Venetian workshops' adherence to established local visual and technical traditions.

By analyzing the form, surface treatment, and decoration of lattimo vessels, the paper identifies a dual structural pattern in its production. On one track, certain lattimo objects meticulously imitated Chinese forms, achieving an almost indistinguishable likeness to exotic imports. Parallel to this, Murano workshops consistently maintained a second track of lattimo production, employing traditional European forms, compositions, and decorative motifs.

The coexistence of these two pathways demonstrates that artisans strategically integrated global stimuli without abandoning the stable framework of local traditions, highlighting Murano's capacity for innovative cultural integration. This sustained innovation subsequently influenced glass production in the Qing imperial court in the 18th century, thus establishing an unconscious, transgeographical dialogue in material craftsmanship between Venice and Beijing.

**Keywords:** Lattimo, Venetian Glass, Chinoiserie, Material Exchange

[1036] Shih-Pei Chen (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science) and Calvin Yeh (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science). *Exploring Visual Materials in Historical Manuscripts and Prints.*

**Abstract.** This poster will report on the digital approaches and tools developed at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science for studying visual materials in historical manuscripts and prints in late imperical China. We use daily-use encyclopedias (riyong leishu) as an test cases to experiment on the state-of-the-art Machine Learning models and algorithms for automatic illustration detection (from page scans) and illustration similarity. Our aim is to help researchers to trace similar visual materials in manuscripts and prints across titles and genres to better understand the visual bloom in the print culture since late 16th century. Focusing on daily-use encyclopedias, we examine how they borrowed visual contents from other genres to trace the transmission, selection criteria, and characteristics of "common knowledge" – knowledge that tailored for non-literati commoners.

**Keywords:** Digital Humanities, Book history, Late imperial China, AI, Visual culture

[1037] Jihyun Kim (Seoul National University). *Between Goryeo and Song China: Lingbao Daoist Visual Culture in the Thirteenth Century.*

**Abstract.** This study examines Lingbao 靈寶 Daoist visual culture through a case study of the 1231 Goryeo manuscript of the Taishang dongxuan lingbao wuliang duren shangpin miao jing 太上洞玄靈寶無量度人上品妙經. Written in gold ink and preserved in folding-album format, the manuscript contains a frontispiece whose iconography offers valuable insights into the visual dimensions of Lingbao Daoism in both Goryeo and Song China. The iconography of this frontispiece provides evidence that the transmission of Lingbao scriptures to Goryeo involved not only textual diffusion but also the preservation and adaptation of visual traditions, thereby shedding light on earlier Chinese Lingbao imagery. The manuscript is one of the very few surviving works from the Goryeo period that preserve Daoist imagery, offering a rare glimpse into a visual tradition whose material traces have survived only fragmentarily on the Korean peninsula. Yet it remains understudied. This study analyzes its material features—calligraphy, pigments, layout, and codicology—while using its donor record and date to trace the religious milieu in which the manuscript was produced. By situating the manuscript within a broader transregional context shared across East Asia, this study highlights its significance for understanding Lingbao Daoist visual culture in both Song China and Goryeo.

**Keywords:** Lingbao Daoism, Goryeo manuscripts, Daoist frontispiece iconography, Song–Goryeo Daoist visual culture

[1041] Hou Ieong Ho (Berlin State Library). *Beyond Language Boundaries: An AI-Enabled Translation and Summarization Service for Historical Multilingual Newspapers.*

**Abstract.** This poster presents a prototype AI translation and summarization service for a multilingual newspaper collection licensed or digitized by the Berlin State Library. The collection contains 60+ historical newspapers from China, Germany, Russia, Taiwan, and the UK (17th–20th centuries) in Chinese, English, German, Japanese, and Russian — making comprehensive exploration difficult. The Berlin State Library is developing a digital service that combines multilingual semantic embeddings with open large language models (LLMs) to provide automatic translation and concise summaries. Users submit sentence-level queries in any supported language; the system performs cross-lingual semantic retrieval and returns translated summaries and links to relevant articles. By lowering language barriers, the platform enables exploratory search and serendipitous discovery across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

**Keywords:** AI, Cross-lingual retrieval, Newspaper archives, Embeddings, Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG), Summarization, Translation, CrossAsia ITR-Newspaper

[1048] Minghan Wei (University of Bern). *Persuasion and Education in the Xunzi and Plato's Phaedrus.*

**Abstract.** This paper examines the transformative person-to-person practices of teaching and education in Plato's Phaedrus and the Confucian philosopher Xunzi, both of whom emphasize external guidance as essential to moral development. In the Phaedrus, Plato presents true rhetoric as a technē—an art of leading the soul (ψυχαγωγία) through words, which aims at instilling in the soul correct opinions and virtues that contribute to the transformation of the soul.Similarly, Xunzi views education (jiao 教) as a transformative activity carried out by the teacher (shi 師 ), who interprets the Confucian classics, corrects errors, and models proper conduct. Without the teacher's guidance, students risk misunderstanding the texts and becoming narrow-minded vulgar Confucians (lou ru 陋儒). The teacher's role is thus indispensable for cultivating virtue and moral discernment. This study analyzes the external transformative activity in Plato's Phaedrus and the Xunzi, focusing on how education functions in shaping the individual. First, I will examine the notion of true persuasion in the Phaedrus, particularly through the analogy between medical practice and philosophical rhetoric, and explore the connection between persuasion and dialectic. Second, I will analyze the practice of persuasion (quan 勸) and teaching in Xunzi, paying close attention to his conception of the teacher and relevant textual passages. Finally, I will compare their respective approaches to leading individuals toward goodness and virtue, highlighting the differences in their educational methods based on their underlying psychological theories.

**Keywords:** education, persuasion, teacher, Xunzi, Plato, cultivation, virtue

[1049] Xingyu Chen (SOAS) and Yingxin Li (University of Chicago). *Imperial Ways of Knowing: Nature, Cosmos, and Political Order in Qing Court Art and Architecture.*

**Abstract.** In the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), the imperial court was a key site for producing and staging knowledge about world, cosmos, and self. Scholarship on Qing court art and architecture has highlighted patronage, diplomacy, stylistic formation, and global exchange, but has less often treated these works as practices of knowing. Drawing on recent work on visual epistemology and "epistemic images," this panel approaches Qing court artworks as material procedures for ordering nature, polity, and cosmos through image and built form. Bringing together case studies on exotic animal paintings tied to tribute diplomacy and Indian Ocean trade, Tibetan Buddhist cosmograms translated into temple architecture, and inner-court albums that script palace women as model connoisseurs of antiquities, the papers trace how visual practices reclassified diverse beings and spaces under an imperial gaze. They show how foreign animals were recast as imperial specimens, how Mount Meru universes were spatially re-centered within Manchu landscapes, and how feminine "talent" was disciplined into a virtue that secured Qianlong's cultural authority. By placing natural history, religion, and gendered connoisseurship in a shared analytical frame, the panel foregrounds the Qing court as an epistemic laboratory in which imported or marginal knowledges from Vietnam, Tibet, Europe, and the inner palace were selectively absorbed, hierarchized, and transformed. Taken together, the papers argue that Qing imperial power operated through visual regimes that did not simply represent difference but actively produced it across the domains of nature, cosmos, and gender, opening a dialogue with broader early modern histories of knowledge and empire.

**Keywords:** Qing court art, visual epistemology, natural history, Tibetan Buddhist cosmology, gendered connoisseurship

**Xingyu Chen (SOAS)** – *Qianlong's Foreign Monkey: Geopolitics, Qing Court Art, and Global Natural History Imagery in Eighteen-Century China*

In 1761, Emperor Qianlong inscribed a poem on Giuseppe Castiglione's painting of a ring-tailed lemur from Madagascar titled Jiaozhi guoran tu (Guoran from Jiaozhi), associating this exotic animal with the mythical monkey-like creature guoran, purportedly a tribute from Vietnam (i.e., Jiaozhi). This poem and painting collectively reflect both tribute delegations and the seventieth birthday celebration of Qianlong's mother, Empress Dowager Xiaoshengxian. While prior studies have traced the global origins of this natural history production, the implications of the lemur-guoran for Qing-Vietnam tribute relations and the significance of Chinese natural historical tradition in the adoption and adaptation of the new knowledge remain underexplored. This paper delves into Castiglione's Jiaozhi guoran tu and a series of related works of art in the Qing court, linking them to Qing's domestic governance, Qing-Vietnam geopolitics, and European trans-continental trades in the Indian Ocean. Drawing on Chinese, Vietnamese, and European archives, it suggests that the lemur-guoran and other contemporary animal paintings, exemplified by the illustrated animal compendium titled Shoupu (Album of Beasts), align well with the Qing court's fascination with exoticism and Qianlong's vision of a Qing-centric cultural-political order. From the perspectives of histories of art and science, this paper uncovers the intricate metaphors of Qing-Vietnam relations and the localization of new natural history knowledge embedded in eighteenth-century Qing court art.

**Yingxin Li (University of Chicago)** – *Centering the Empire: Qing Court Reconstructions of Tibetan Buddhist Mount Meru Imagery*

By the early Qing, European astronomy and cartography at court introduced a mathematically grounded world picture, yet they did not displace the ritual significance of the Mount Meru universe central to Tibetan Buddhism. The court simultaneously sponsored visualizations of this Meru-centered cosmos, from thirty-seven-point mandala offerings that were produced as diplomatic gifts for Qing emperors to Sino-Tibetan temples modeled on Tashilhunpo that materialized the cosmic mountain in architectural form. I argue that the repeated reproduction and monumentalization of such imagery at court reconfigured a Meru-centered Buddhist universe into a Qing-centered Buddhist cosmos. While previous studies have treated these objects and buildings mainly in terms of artistic style and patronage, less attention has been paid to their embedded cosmologies within Qing-Tibetan politico-religious dynamics. This paper examines how the Qing court, drawing on a Mount Meru cosmology systematized in the Abhidharmakośa, adopted and reworked Meru-centered ritual cosmograms in portable objects and in architecture. Focusing on mandala offerings in the imperial collections and on Xumi Fushou Temple at the Chengde Mountain Resort, it first sketches the Mount Meru world and its ritual functions in Tibetan sources and then traces its reinterpretation within Qing-Tibetan exchange. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, the study compares the spatial organization of Xumi Fushou and its prototype Tashilhunpo to show how imperial design strategies recentered the cosmic mountain within a Manchu landscape. In doing so, it

highlights how imperial politics and religious interaction were articulated through spatial practice.

[1051] Cai Qinghua (Fudan University). *The Ethical Connotation of "Bugan" (不敢) in the Laozi.*

**Abstract.** "Bugan" (不敢, "dare not") or "bugan wei" (不敢为, "dare not act") appears in six chapters of the Laozi. The expression is highly representative of the text's philosophy: while it may appear "passive" on the surface, it is not negative within the ideological framework of the Laozi—rather, it carries positive implications. This paper explores the true meaning of "bugan" in the context of the Laozi by interpreting its original connotations. In the Laozi, "bugan" reflects a respect for individuality; however, it cannot be simply understood through the notion of "inclusiveness," nor equated with an advocacy of "freedom." It was proposed by Laozi in the context of contemplating ethical issues within asymmetrical relationships. Compared to other concepts in the Laozi, "bugan" is an expression with greater practical value and significance, inherently embodying attributes of "dialogue" and "reflection. The term "bugan" in the Laozi differs from its everyday meaning (often interpreted as "humility"). It can be regarded as a normative requirement for human conduct. Yet it must be clarified that this requirement is not a moral one. Such clarification helps prevent the reduction of Laozi's thought to a form of moral relativism.
**Keywords:** ethical, Bugan, the Laozi

[1053] Rusha Jin (University of Edinburgh). *How to Bridge Text and Meaning: The Chinese Buddhist Text Mohe zhiguan and Its Interpretive Principles.*

**Abstract.** In premodern Chinese scholarly traditions, commentators often had to decide how to connect inherited texts with the needs and capacities of new readers. This paper examines this problem through the Tang Tiantai monk Zhanran (711-782) and his Zhiguan yili 止觀義例, a reading guide composed to help readers comprehend one of the most foundational texts within the Tiantai School, Zhiyi's Mohe zhiguan 摩訶止觀. Zhiguan yili takes the Mohe zhiguan to be a dense text whose depth cannot be accessed through surface-level explanation alone. To help the readers fully grasp the meaning of the Mohe zhiguan, Zhiguan yili is organised as a reading guide that reveals the interpretive principles of the Mohe zhiguan. Its creation embodies Zhanran's view that an accurate and full understanding of the text's depth must be unlocked through its interpretive principles. Placing Zhiguan yili within the wider landscape of premodern Chinese scholarship, it suggests that reading guides of this kind are a characteristic way in which Chinese Buddhist and other scholars addressed the gap between authoritative writings and actual readers. The case of Zhanran therefore speaks not only to the study of Tang Buddhism and religion, but also to broader discussions of reading and interpretation in the history of premodern Chinese thought.
**Keywords:** Premodern Chinese Studies, Commentarial literature, Buddhist Exegesis, Tiantai School, Zhanran

[1055] Ran Tai (University of Zurich). *Strucuture and Indexing in Mozi's jing shuo Structure.*

**Abstract.** The Mohist jing (經) and shuo (說) form a distinctive dual-layer textual system in early China, yet the internal structural differences that shape their relationship remain understudied. Building on A.C. Graham's reconstruction of the dialectical chapters and Erik Maeder's work on the material instability of bamboo manuscripts, this paper examines the syntactic and functional divergence across Jing Shang (經上), Jing Xia (經下), and the Jing Shuo (經說) materials. Jing Shang consists almost entirely of compact nominal definitions in the pattern "X, Y ye（X，Y 也）," which delimit the semantic boundaries of key terms. Jing Xia, however, adds to more elaborate propositional structures and introduces indexical formulas such as "shuo zai…（說在……）,an indication that related material is to be sought elsewhere." directing readers toward related passages in the Jing Shuo. Earlier observations—such as the partial overlap between the opening characters of certain jing and shuo—have motivated attempts at one-to-one pairing, yet these markers do not produce transparent correspondences. Instead, they function as domain-level pointers that, within the constraints of unstable bamboo-slip bundles, may in some cases have served as cross-slip navigational cues. The shuo sections themselves display a range of textual operations, including definitional clarification, analytic unpacking, inferential extension, hypothetical modeling, and metalinguistic reflection. These heterogeneous operations interact asymmetrically with the "shuo zai…" markers, producing a non-linear architecture for organizing conceptual and argumentative material. The paper argues that the Mohist jing–shuo structure is not a commentary system but a historically layered knowledge-organization technology. Definitions regulate semantic space, while propositional structures and loose index markers help preserve the coherence and retrievability of inference-heavy reasoning within a fragile material medium.
**Keywords:** Mohist, Jing shuo structure, jingshuo, textual forms

[1058] Yi Liu (Ruhr University of Bochum). *Beyond Capital: Foreign Banks, Institutional Reform, and the Making of Modern Chinese Finance.*

**Abstract.** This study examines the early years of China's Reform and Opening (1970s–1980s) through the lens of foreign financial institutions. While the mid-1970s trade reorientation from the Soviet bloc to the West created an urgent demand for capital to fund industrial modernization, China faced a critical structural bottleneck: its pre-1979 "mono-bank" system lacked the institutional capacity to manage commercial risk and external debt. Consequently, domestic banking reform became a prerequisite for accessing international capital. Drawing on extensive archival research from West German corporate and state records, this paper analyses the strategic entries of West German banks into China as case studies. It argues that the significance of these foreign institutions extended far beyond mere capital provision. Instead, they functioned as conduits for essential analytical, operational, and institutional expertise. This engagement created a virtuous cycle: as they transferred financial know-how, they simultaneously acquired critical local knowledge that secured them strategic advantages. The study concludes that China's reform was not a unilateral market opening, but a reciprocal process of knowledge generation, wherein China absorbed global financial norms while foreign actors learned to navigate a unique political economy.

**Keywords:** Reform and Opening, Monobank system, Foreign banks, Economic reforms, Financial reforms

[1062] Stefania Stafutti (University of Turin). *Cai Yan and the Beifen shi (悲愤诗): Between Literary Shaping and Political Fabrication.*

**Abstract.** Ancient Chinese culture, like that of other great ancient civilizations, relegated women to a secondary position in the processes of literary and cultural production. In recent years, however, both in China and worldwide, the study of women's literary output has received considerable scholarly attention. This paper examines the figure of the Eastern Han poet Cai Yan 蔡琰 (courtesy name Wenji 文姬) with the following main objectives:

• To situate the construction of the myth of the "poetess-heroine" within a more complex historical context, demonstrating that the formation of such a myth in fact responded to specific political needs, especially in the late Eastern Han period and during the rule of Cao Cao 曹操, and, within this context, to reflect on the reception of the Poem of Sorrow and Indignation (Beifen shi 悲愤诗) traditionally attributed to her.

• To analyze the figure of Cai Yan as she appears in historical sources, showing that this figure (or the narrative fashioned around her) raises a number of issues that transcend literature in the strict sense, and instead correspond to the political need to fashion this woman into a "moral exemplar," despite the many "morally controversial" aspects of her biographical trajectory.

• To show how, once certain political needs had receded, the high esteem accorded to Cai Yan could be called into question. This is evident, for example, in the Tongshi 通史 of the eminent Tang historian Liu Zhiji 刘知几 (661–721), who takes Cai Yan as a (negative) example precisely when reflecting on the orthodoxy, authority, and moral reliability of historical writing: "When we arrive at the section devoted to the women of the Eastern Han, Xu Shu 徐淑 is not mentioned, whereas Cai Yan is included. If one wishes to trust what is recorded by the 'vermilion brush,' on what criteria can such choices be based? 至蔚宗后汉, 传标列女, 徐淑不齿，而蔡琰见书。欲使彤管所载，将安准的？"

Liu Zhiji implicitly argues that Cai Yan does not conform to the ideal model of the "chaste woman" (貞女 zhen nü). How, then, should we explain the "privileged treatment" accorded to her? Is it merely an error on the part of the historiographers?

**Keywords:** literature, gender, Cai Yan, Eastern Han

[1063] Francesca Puglia (Bern University), Michele Pulini (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), Mirko Bergamini (Sapienza Università di Roma) and Kai Vogelsang (Hamburg University). *Topics in Classical Chinese Grammar.*

**Abstract.** After more than two centuries of systematic research, the field of Classical Chinese grammar remains as exciting as ever. In recent years, manuscripts have added a cornucopia of fresh material to be studied, numerous translations of Classical texts have been produced, comprehensive grammars have been published (e.g. Unger 2019, Scarpari/ Andreini 2020), textbooks have distilled our knowledge into didactic manuals (e.g. Vogelsang 2021, Andreini/Baccini/Scarpari 2022), and artificial intelligence has opened entirely new possibilities of analysis (as seen, for example, in the Thesaurus Linguae Sericae). Yet, uncertainties and controversies remain on all levels of investigation. The contributions to this panel neatly showcase the state of the field insofar as they cover almost the whole spectrum of enquiry into Classical Chinese. They are based on manuscripts and transmitted texts and on

genres as diverse as cosmogonies, handbooks for early imperial officials, as well as philosophical and historical literature; and they deal with topics that range from historical phonology and morphology, rhymes, questions of lexicon and concepts, syntactic structures to the structure of entire texts. No attempt is made to unify the concepts and explanatory schemes offered in this panel, nor do the papers seek to supply definite answers to the questions they pose. They remain diverse and open for discussion: in this way, too, they are representative of the entire field.
**Keywords:** Classical Chinese, Scribal practice, Syntacti structures, Complements

**Francesca Puglia (Bern University)** – *The Semantics of Self-Generation in the Heng xian 恆先 Bamboo Manuscript*
Heng xian 恆先 is the title of a looted manuscript in the Shanghai Museum 上海博物館 collection, acquired on the Hong Kong antiquities market in 1994. The title, corresponding to the first two characters inked at the beginning of the first of thirteen bamboo slips, also appears on the verso of the third slip. Paleographic features link the manuscript to the state of Chu 楚, and carbon-14 analysis coherently places it in the late Warring States period. The text presents one of the oldest and most elaborate cosmogonies preserved in early Chinese tradition. One feature that stands out in the Heng xian is its systematic use of reflexive constructions, such as zisheng 自生 and zizuo 自作, when describing stages of cosmological emergence without recourse to an external agent. Taken together, these expressions articulate a mode of self-arising activity that seems to play a key role in the text's attempt to explain how differentiation occurs within an initially undetermined state. Complementing this is the manuscript's striking assertion that heng 恆 "does not engender qi 氣" which positions heng not as an initiating force but as a constant or abiding condition within which such self-directed processes unfold. This paper examines how these reflexive expressions function semantically and situates them within the text's broader cosmogonic vocabulary, aiming to clarify the conceptual dynamics underlying the Heng xian's distinctive vision of cosmic self-articulation.

**Michele Pulini (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)** – *Repairing the Underspecification of the Script: Scribal Strategies and Reading Practices in Warring States Excavated Texts*
Far from being the textbook example of isolating language, prior to the Han dynasty, Chinese had an affixal morphology and a much more complex syllable structure, resembling much closer the other languages of the Sino-Tibetan family. Much of these elements are not visible either from the phonology of modern Sinitic languages (which all split from the common ancestor after a major typological shift in the Han dynasty) nor from the writing system, which is usually described as "underspecified" as it mostly encodes syllable types leaving aside a great deal of the morphological information. This is not a peculiarity of the Chinese writing system alone: other scriptiones defectivae have existed in the ancient world (e.g. Sumerian) and still exist nowadays (e.g. Arabic). As it happened for other contexts, also early Chinese scribes developed a set of strategies for disambiguating between different readings, namely phonophore complementation (chongshengzi 重聲字), proto-fanqie 反切 characters, division of labour between allographs (yiti fengong 異體分工) and specialised characters (zhuanzaozi 專造字). Most of these strategies were later discarded after the imposition of an orthographic standard after the Imperial Unification, and they are usually not considered in the study of Old Chinese. On the other side, a scarce integration between the fields of Historical Phonology and Philology prevents scholars from a deeper understanding of what might be at stake behind some graphic variants attested in Warring States excavated texts. Through some illustrative examples, this presentation will discuss to what extent such practices can shed further light on the Old Chinese language, its morpho-syntax and phonology, but also on early Chinese scribal and reading practices.

**Mirko Bergamini (University of Rome Sapienza)** – "*The Way to education": syntactic structure of ancient Chinese handbooks*
For centuries, the training of officials in early imperial times has been a difficult research subject. Recent archaeological discoveries play a pivotal role in the study of this matter. Particularly interesting are three texts that were discovered in the last four decades: the *Weili zhi dao 為吏之道 (unearthed near Shuihudi 睡虎地 in 1970), the Weili zhi guan ji qianshou 為吏治官及黔首 (acquired by the Yuelu Academy 岳麓書院 of Changsha 長沙 in 2007) and the *Congzheng zhi jing 從政之經 (acquired by Peking University 北京大學 in 2010). Regarded as handbooks for early imperial officials, we have now a glimpse of what kind of material was used for their education. Mainly structured by fixed tetrasyllabic lines, they also highly used rhymes. The latter feature proves once more that rhymes were not only a simple poetic tool but were also employed in the so-called "technical" texts. Aim of my talk will be to propose a preliminary analysis of their structure, particularly analysing if and how the syntactic structure of the sentences was changed to fit into tetrasyllabic lines or into rhyming schemes. Moreover, I will try to demonstrate how rhymes played a central role in the structuring of these texts. Used as specific tools to tie together their contents, they also played an important role helping officials with the study and the memorisation

of the contents.

[1065] Aleksandra Kubat (King's College London). *Political Morality Cadre College: Redefining the moral and the political under Xi Jinping.*

**Abstract.** This paper looks at an effort to create new cadre training model and related teaching infrastructure which accommodate Xi Jinping Thought's cultural component. It takes a closer look at the Political Morality Cadre College based in Qufu, Shandong Province, which constitutes a major attempt to incorporate Confucian values into cadre formation and management processes. This paper unearths several specificities of that project. First, it shows how political moral ideas extracted from China's imperial past are now appropriated to serve as professional ethics and political standard in cadre performance. Second, by comparing the two sets of training, namely classical training and red education, this paper shows that in this new type of training agenda, cadre ethos and work objectives are no longer expressed solely in ideological language but are pronounced through traditional and philosophical notions. Finally, analysis shows that the problem of corruption permeates the content of political morality training, and it is being addressed by a two-pronged approach which relies on strong regulatory nature of traditional values supplementing the "hard," legalistic approach presented by specialised Party organs.

**Keywords:** Xi Jinping Thought, ideology, party schools, cadre training, political morality, traditional culture

[1066] Rafael Suter (Universität Zürich, Asien-Orient-Institut). *Telling things apart, telling what is right, telling the truth – from a linguistic anatomy of shì fēi 是非 to some possible philosophical implications.*

**Abstract.** There is no shortage of thorny terms in ancient Chinese texts. But the case of shì and fēi seems especially complicated and multifaceted: They constantly waver between telling what a thing or state of affair is and what it is not, whether someone or something is right or not, and whether something is or isn't the case. We thus have one and the same lexical contrast pertaining to the domains of classification, evaluations, and truth. A lot has been said about this distinction, e.g. in the book length study by Ma and Brakel (2019). This talk approaches this functional multidimensionality with a philosophical interest, but from a linguistic and historical perspective: Concentrating on shì, a look at how it actually works in texts promises to allow a better understanding of the three vastly different uses mentioned above. As an anaphora, it can refer to sentential and thus propositional entities, but also to nominal phrases and single nouns, thereby bridging the domains of the propositional (something is the case) on the one hand and the referential and classificatory (something is the same as the aforementioned) on the other. As a pronoun it resembles nouns in that it can be used as a putative/causative verb, thus referring to the very act of judgement. As a demonstrative, shì finally is deictic and speaker-oriented. These grammatical properties do not predetermine the uses of shì, but they define the general direction debates about shì and fēi took.

**Keywords:** Chinese philosophical terminology, fact-value distinction, classification, evaluation, truth, demonstrative pronoun, anaphora, deixis, linguistic relativism

[1071] Mathieu Torck (Ghent University). *"There and back again" – Tramway engineering in the Belgian Concession on the eve of Republican China: an analysis of François Nuyens' textual and photographic China writings.*

**Abstract.** Against the backdrop of the waning Qing dynasty, François Nuyens (1878-1951), a Ghent-born engineer, was sent by the Belgian railway authorities to the Belgian Concession in Tianjin to provide support in the context of the establishment of tramway infrastructure. Nuyens' China years (1905-1908) resulted in the compilation of an extensive manuscript which documents his journeys to and from China and contains chapters on a variety of ethnographic topics. While his writings initially were never meant to circulate widely, Nuyens presents himself as a modest, yet keen observer. Besides, the author compiled a collection of self-made photographic images as well as a number of popular pictures circulating widely at the time. Both primary source materials provide a unique insight into the ways a Belgian technician reflects on his personal journey and Chinese modernity and conveys his colonialist perception of the non-Western world. The paper attempts to assess the significance of Nuyens' impressionist "diary" fed by his personal experiences and persistent racial observations of the "Other" (Said 1978). Nuyens' unexpected work offers a window on the transfer of Western technology to a rapidly changing China in the orbit of global capitalism (Li 2020). Furthermore, by combining theoretical considerations on photographs that "operate as complex discursive objects of colonial power and culture" (Hight and Samson 2002) and "visual truth" (Gu 2013), the paper aims to assess the documentary value of this photographic archive and its place within the broader realm of early twentieth century photography shaping the image of the "face of China" (Fraser 2010).

**Keywords:** François Nuyens, photographic archive, face of China

[1072] Keiko Ono (Princeton University). *A New Textbook for Sinologists: "A Practical Guide for Scholarly Reading in Japanese".*

**Abstract.** In 2023, I co-authored "A Practical Guide for Scholarly Reading in Japanese" with FumikoNazikian (Columbia University) and Naofumi Tatsumi (Brown University), published byRoutledge.This innovative reference work is developed mainly for students and scholars in Chinese Studies,based on the course entitled "Academic Japanese for Sinologists" that I created two decades agoat Princeton for our graduate students in Chinese studies.By focusing exclusively on reading comprehension, the textbook enables Sinologists toefficiently acquire the skills to read Japanese scholarship from the early 20th century to thepresent day in all fields across the humanities and social sciences.This book provides concise explanations of essential grammar points for reading academicJapanese and includes practice exercises based on example sentences taken from well-knownJapanese academic papers on China. Each reading text is accompanied by a vocabulary list andexplanations of expressions. The book can be used both as a textbook for classes and as a self-study guide.At the EACS, I will provide a detailed introduction to the book and present its contents toresearchers specializing in Chinese studies who aim to improve their academic Japanese reading skills.

**Keywords:** New Textbook for Academic Japanese for Sinologists, Academic Japanese on China since early 20th century, Concise Explanations of Essential Grammar Points, Reading comprehension practice