

2025
3-5 September

協漢英
會學國
BACS



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

BACS Annual Conference
University of Leicester

Welcome!

Dear friends and colleagues,

On behalf of this year's BACS conference team, I welcome you to the University of Leicester. BACS is a non-political organisation, which aims to encourage and promote Chinese Studies, defined as broadly as possible, in the United Kingdom. Founded in 1976, BACS has been at the forefront of developments that have transformed Chinese Studies from a small subject into a mainstream trend across all levels of educational, media, business, and political interest.

In an era of rapid global changes, it has become even more critical than ever for us and the wider public to develop a deep understanding of Chinese history, culture, economy, politics, language, as well as China's international relations. This year, the organisation team has received a large number of proposals from a broad range of disciplines. I hope this conference provides you with an enriching intellectual exchange and offers a vital space for engaging with the complex and evolving debates about China and Chinese societies.

Throughout the conference, you will have the opportunity to explore a diverse range of keynote addresses, presentations, roundtable discussions, and screenings. I am particularly excited to feature our distinguished keynote speakers: Professor Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh (Lingnan University, Hong Kong), Professor Kerry Brown (King's College London, UK), Professor Steve Tsang (SOAS, UK) and Ms. Cindy Yu (The Times, UK). Their insights will undoubtedly stimulate vibrant conversation and discussion.

As always, the conference is designed not only to exchange knowledge but also to foster new connections and inspire future research. I hope this conference will provide the future generation of scholars with a platform to share their ideas and passion in the field of Chinese Studies. In addition to the scheduled presentations, I would encourage all BACS members to join the AGM on Friday, 5 September, and support the presentation from our ECR prize winner.

I am grateful for your commitment to the scholarship in Chinese Studies and for being an integral part of this important event. I hope your time in Leicester is not only intellectually fulfilling and thought-provoking but also personally enjoyable and memorable. Should you require any assistance during the conference, please do not hesitate to approach our PGR volunteers, who will be readily available at the registration desk and all three floors of the venue. Our volunteers are from different Schools based at the College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, and they have dedicated their time to the preparation, organisation and delivery of the conference over many months. My sincere thanks to Xu Chang, Peilin Li, Yvonne Zhao, Samantha Gao, Ding Minghan, Qin Roni, Cheng Linjun, Song Yiming, Roland Wang, Li Rong, Xiao Chenye and Lillian Bishop.

Of course, organising a conference of this scale would not be possible without the support of colleagues, friends and BACS council members who chair panels and facilitate discussions. I am grateful to my wonderful colleagues in the Professional Service Team at the University of Leicester, particularly Carla Starmer, Lydia Rowell, Ben Reed, Simon Poole, and John Borthwick. It would be unimaginable to navigate through the venue, catering arrangements, financial transactions, and technical aspects without their help. I would also like to thank my colleagues at the School of Arts, Media and Communication, Catherine Morley, Mary Ann Lund, Martin Halliwell, Yan Ying and David Christopher for their support at various stages of the conference organisation.

Best wishes for a productive and enjoyable experience.

Lin Feng
2025 BACS Conference Chair

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Schedule at a Glance

Wednesday, 3 September 2025		
08:45-09:45	Registration	Sir Bob Burgess Foyer (Ground Floor)
09:45-10:15	Welcome speech	Sir Bob Burgess Lecture Theatre 1
10:15-10:30	Transition break	
10:30-12:00	Parallel panels (Session A)	
12:00-13:00	Lunch break	
13:00-14:30	Parallel panels (Session B)	
14:30-14:45	Break	
14:45-16:15	Parallel panels (Session C)	
16:15-16:30	Break	
16:30-17:30	Keynote Discussion: "The Future of Sino-British Relations" with Ms. Cindy Yu, Professor Kerry Brown and Professor Steve Tsang	Sir Bob Burgess Lecture Theatre 1

Thursday, 4 September 2025		
09:15-10:45	Parallel panels (Session D)	
10:45-11:00	Break	
11:00-12:00	Keynote Speech "Testing the Canon: Digital Scholarship and Early Cinema in Hong Kong" by Professor Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh	Sir Bob Burgess Lecture Theatre 1
12:00-13:00	Lunch break	
13:00-14:30	Parallel panels (Session E)	
14:30-14:45	Break	
14:45-16:15	Parallel panels (Session F)	
16:15-16:30	Break	
16:30-17:45	Parallel panels (Session G)	

Friday, 5 September 2025		
09:00-10:00	BACS Council meeting (Council members and members-elect only)	
10:00-11:30	Parallel panels (Session H)	
11:30-11:45	Break	
11:45-12:45	BACS AGM	Sir Bob Burgess Lecture Theatre 1
12:45-13:45	Lunch break	
13:45-15:15	Parallel panels (Session I)	
15:15-15:30	Break	
15:30-17:00	Parallel panels (Session J)	
17:00-17:30	Closing reception	Sir Bob Burgess Foyer (Ground Floor)

Programme

Keys:

P=Pre-formed panel; **H**=Hybrid session with online presentation(s); **O**=Online presentations only; **R**=Roundtable Discussion; **S**=Screening

SBB=Sir Bob Burgess Building; **AFT**=Attenborough Film Theatre (on main campus); **LT**=Lecture Theatre

D1: Wednesday, 3 September 2025

08:45-09:45	SBB Foyer (ground floor)	Registration		
09:45-10:15	SBB LT1	Welcome speech Professor Chris Berry (President for the British Association of Chinese Studies) Professor Henrietta O'Connor (Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor for the University of Leicester) Dr Lin Feng (Honorary Secretary and Acting Treasurer for the British Association of Chinese Studies, 2025 conference chair)		
10:15-10:30		Transition break		
Time	Room	Panel ID	Panel Title and Chair	Papers
10:30-12:00 Session A	SBB LT1	A0100 [P]	Chinese Cities: A Twentieth-Century Experiment in Continuity Chair: Yichuan Chen	The World of Chen Qingcai: A Contractor and Real Estate Developer in Rural and Urban East China, 1914-1931 Yichuan Chen (University College London) Laying Bricks in Communist China: A Study on Brickwork Crafts and Labour Systems in China, 1949-1966 Tian Zhang (Tongji University) The Development and Lived Experience of Workers' Houses in Late 20th Century China Yifan Li (Queen Mary University of London)
10:30-12:00 Session A	SBB LT2	A0101 [P]	Constructing and Conceptualising Modern He'nan Chair: Yuehanjiang (Azure) Bao	How to move a Capital: Kaifeng, Zhengzhou, and Socialist Centrality in the Fifties Mark Baker (University of Manchester) (Re)constructing the Hometown of the Yellow Emperor in Henan (1980-) Mengyuan Tian (University of Cambridge)

				<p>Entertainment Before the Wheat Harvest: A Temple Fair for Buddha's Birthday Among a Small Area Yangyang Lan (École Pratique des Hautes Études)</p> <p>Constructing Pangdonglai: Vernacular Ideology and Fandom Economics in Xinxiang Yuehanjiang (Azure) Bao (University College London)</p>
<p>10:30-12:00 Session A</p>	SBB 0.02	A0102 [P]	<p>Crossing Borders with Ink: Textual Compilation, Cultural Concepts and Foreign Relations in the Qing Empire's Frontier Regions</p> <p>Chair: Nora Yitong Qiu</p>	<p>Qing Empire, Native Chieftain Mu Family and the Nakhi People in Yunnan Frontier: Resistance, Agency, Civilizing Project and Imperial Eyes of Colonial Lijiang Ting Cheung Wong (State University of New York)</p> <p>Gaps in Translation: An Examination of the Compilation of Manchu-Chinese-Korean Multilingual Dictionaries in Chosŏn Kuan Chieh Chen (National Taiwan University)</p> <p>An Extraordinary Act beyond Convention: Kui Xu's Mission to Joseon under the Kangxi Reign PinHsin Huang (National Taiwan University)</p> <p>Extraterritoriality, First Unequal Treaty and Nation-State Building Chao Lang (Harvard University)</p>
<p>10:30-12:00 Session A</p>	SBB 1.01	A0103 [P]	<p>Reinvigorating Leninism for the 21st Century: Party Governance in Xi Jinping's Third Term</p> <p>Chair: Jane Duckett</p>	<p>Party Governance as a Method for China's Foreign Policy Olivia Cheung (King's College London)</p> <p>Governing Time: Party governance at the Intersection of History and Culture Jean Christopher Mittelstaedt (University of Zurich)</p> <p>Engineering Hypocrisy in Xi's China: Is 'Strict Party Governance' Creating a 'Culture of Simulation'? Patricia Thornton (University of Oxford)</p> <p>'If not the Party, then Who?': Organizing Society the Party Way under the CCP Central Society Work Department Holly Snape (University of Glasgow)</p>

10:30-12:00 Session A	SBB 1.02	A0104 [P]	Peace, Gender and Diplomacy in Twentieth Century China Chair/Discussant: Federica Ferlanti	Labour Activist and Christian Diplomat: Deng Yuzhi's International Thought Jennifer Bond (University College London) Feminist Entanglements in Sino-French Relations: Writing Women and Diplomatic Circles in Interwar France Coraline Jortay (French Centre for Scientific Research) 'China Goes West': Guo Jingqiu and Chinese Resistance in the United States during the Global Second World War Helena Lopes (Cardiff University)
10:30-12:00 Session A	SBB 1.03	A0105 [P]	Using Hong Kong's Past in History, Historiography and Comedy Chair: Adonis M. Y. Li	Accidents, Complaints and State-society-passenger Relations on Hong Kong's Railway, c. 1950s-1970s Adonis M. Y. Li (University of Lincoln) Laughter in the Dark: Dayo Wong, (Post)Comedy and Collective Catharsis in Post-2019 Hong Kong Cinema Wayne Wong (University of Sheffield) Hong Kong within Global History David Clayton (University of York)
10:30-12:00 Session A	SBB 1.04	A0106 [P]	Cultural (Re)Mediation of Memories of Chinese Wartime Pasts Chair: Shaoyu Yang	Reimagining Chinese American Performativity in the Shadow of Wars in Shanghai Girls Shuyue Liu (University of Nottingham) Mediating Visual Trauma: Ekphrasis, Intermediality and Postmemorial Art in Wing Tek Lum's The Nanjing Massacre: Poems (2012) Yuan Liu (University of Glasgow) The Girl and the Picture: Digital Storytelling and Survivor Agency in the Testimonies of Chinese Comfort Women XU Jie (Jocelyn) (University of York) Representations and Remembrances of the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War in Contemporary Chinese Literature Shaoyu Yang (University of Warwick)

10:30-12:00 Session A	SBB 2.03	A0107 [P, H]	<p>Cultural Resilience in the Recession Era: Strategies, Policy Shifts and Community Connections in Chinese Museums</p> <p>Chair: Junjie Su</p> <p>Discussant: Mingyuan Jiang, Yaxuan Chen, Xin Gao and He Ren</p>	<p>Subtopic 1: Fluid Heritage: Transnational Narratives, Property Disputes, and Cultural Identity in Museums Breaking the Silence: Museums and Sex Education Xingyue Yang (University of Glasgow)</p> <p>Subtopic 2: Technology Empowerment and Narrative Innovation: The Digital Transformation of Museums and Public Engagement Reimagining Space as Narrative: Enhancing Cultural Resilience through Spatial Storytelling in Museums Chenying Huang (Fudan University)</p> <p>Subtopic 3: Marketization and Non-Marketization Practices in Chinese Museums Rethinking the Intangible Cultural Heritage Museums in China Junjie Su (University College London/Yunnan University)</p> <p>Sale Red Stories – Shanghai Red Culture and Cultural and Creative Industry Di Cheng (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)</p>
10:30-12:00 Session A	SBB 2.04	A0108 [P]	<p>Navigating Family, Gender and Generational Change: New Perspectives on Contemporary Chinese Families</p> <p>Chair: Tan Haoyue</p>	<p>Understanding Contemporary Chinese Fatherhood: Cultures and Practices of Urban Middle-Class Millennial Fathers Haoyue Tan (University College London)</p> <p>Reciprocal IVF Decision-Making Among Lesbian Couples in Mainland China: A Relational Approach Xuerui Hu (University College London)</p> <p>Negotiating Contemporary Chinese Motherhood: Middle-Class Mothers and the Dynamics of Extracurricular Activities in Urban China Yifei Sun (University of Bristol)</p> <p>Reciprocity in Familial Intergenerational Gifting Practices: Constructing Generational Orders Ruiqi Deng (University College London)</p> <p>Learning Child's LGB+ Identities in Nowadays China: A Dynamic Process of Adaptation and Acceptance</p>

				Fengqiang Wang (University of Bristol)
	SBB 2.08	A0109 [P]	Gender, Legacies and Identities: Bridging Migrant Regions and Hometowns of Overseas Chinese Chair: Ruoran Pei	'Jae' Chinese Thai Female Merchants and Thai Markets, 1930s-1960s Jaruwan Teanmahasatid (SOAS University of London) Remembering Zishunü: How Museums Preserve the Legacies and Shape the Narratives of Single Women Ruoran Pei (SOAS University of London) Diasporic Chinese Identities in Southeast Asian Tropical Space – A Visual Representation Hanxiang Zhang (SOAS University of London)
	Freemen's Kitchen & Bar	Lunch break		
13:00-14:30 Session B	SBB LT1	B0200 [P]	The Anxieties of Modernity in Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature: Technology, Power, and Gender Yuwei Li	Re-imagine Ways of Human-Machine Co-creation: A Critical Review of Contemporary Chinese Poetry and Artificial Intelligence's Entangled Practices Xuemeng Zhang (SOAS University of London) The Crisis of Expression: Dream, Power and Modernity in China Dream and 'The Waking Dream' Yuwei Li (SOAS University of London) The Ineffable Illness: Ethical Dilemmas, Female Identity and Modernity in Ding Ling's 'The Girl Ah Mao' Xinyang Zhao (SOAS University of London)
13:00-14:30 Session B	SBB LT2	B0201 [R]	Teaching Post-Mao China as History Chair: Mark Baker	Roundtable discussion among Qiuyang Chen, Song-Chuan Chen, Federica Ferlanti, Tehyun Ma and Shirley Ye
13:00-14:30 Session B	SBB 0.02	B0202	Military Management: From Past to Present Chair: David Christopher	The Ideal and Reality of Expansion: Rethinking King Zhao of Zhou's Military Failure from a Comparative Perspective Xinyan Yu (University of Edinburgh) How the Spirit Was Broken: Realities, Communities and Casualties in Wartime China through the Lens of Young Officers

				Chuwei He (University of Edinburgh)
13:00-14:30 Session B	SBB 1.02	B0204	Nature, Environment and Disaster Chair: Gerda Wielander	Theorisation of Environmental Justice in Traditional Chinese Political Philosophies Shizhi Zhang (University of Sheffield) Toward a Structural Mimesis: Writing (Like) Nature in Contemporary Chinese Poetry Joanna Krenz (Adam Mickiewicz University) Adaptive Characteristics and Resilience Mechanism of Living Environment oriented to disaster response: The Case of Longnan City, China Wanke Liu (Beijing Forestry University)
13:00-14:30 Session B	SBB 1.03	B0205 [P]	Histories of Chinese Migration in Britain and the British Empire Chair: Rachel K. Bright	Lock Ah Tam (1872-1926) and Labor Contracting of Chinese Seafarers in Early 20th- Century Liverpool Yuntian Xuan (Rutgers University–New Brunswick) 'The Genuine Children of Limehouse Chinatown': Voicing 'Ordinariness' of Interraciality in the Early Twentieth Century Britain Sha Zhou (University of Manchester) 'Read my Case Book, One Page by One Page': A Cantonese Gold Miner's Appeal from the Lunatic Aylum of Colonial Melbourne Ge (Gigi) Tang (University College Dublin) How State and Society in China Confronted South African Indenture Nicholas McGee (Durham University)
13:00-14:30 Session B	SBB 1.04	B0206	Contemporary Digital Urban Life of China Chair: Paul Kendall	'A Darkness Shimmering in the Light': Frontier Imaginaries, Urban Modernity and Psychological Healing in the Contemporary Chinese Moving Image Annabella Mei Massey (University of London) Beyond Technologies of Care: Grassroots Negotiations of Smart Eldercare Initiatives in Urban China Yuet Yan Katherine Wong (University of Oxford)

				Smart Phones Updating the Conception of Chinese Smart Cities: Geographic Observation of an Ultra-connected Digital World-mobile-dependent smart-urbanism in Guiyang (Guizhou Province) Vanessa Hammouche (University of Orleans)
13:00-14:30 Session B	SBB 2.03	B0207 [O]	Poetic Dialect, Anachronism, Calligraphy and Folk Religion Chair: Yan Ying	Anachronism or the Sword of Damocles: The Revival of the Discourse of Qiangang Duduan in the Late Qing Constitutional Reform Yutao Yao (Tohoku University) Calligraphy's Turning Point: 'Si Ti Shu Shi' and the Han-Jin Transition Qianzhi Zhuang (Guangdong University of Technology) Between State and Society: The Mediating Role of Folk Religion in Taiwan's Democratic Governance Die Hu (Georg-August-University Göttingen) Poetic Dialect in Documentary Filmmaking from a Chinese Lens Chen Chen (University of Technology)
13:00-14:30 Session B	SBB 2.04	B0208	China-Britain Exchange Chair: Jocelyn Xu	'Signing the Unequal Treaty under Duress?' The Role of Chinese Minor Officials in the Treaty of Nanjing Zicheng Zou (University of Manchester) The Sound of the New British Natives: Ecocritical Recordings of Rhododendron Ponticum in Yan Wang Preston and Monty Adkins's With Love. From an Invader Alina Sinelnik (independent) The Politics of Reproduction: Touchpoints between Contemporary British and Chinese Women's Art Yiqing (Virginia) Yang (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University) Specimens or Fakes? Constructing Authenticity of Chinese paintings at the British Museum 1880 – 1910 Yitao Qian (SOAS University of London)
13:00-14:30	SBB 2.05	B0209	Gender in Focus: Exploring Gender in	Rhetoricising and Poeticising Gender in English Translations of Cantonese Opera Kelly (Kar Yue) Chan (Hong Kong Metropolitan University)

Session B			Chinese Literature and Translation Chair: Lin Feng	Social Class and Gender: Representations of Baomu (domestic workers) in Contemporary Chinese Television Yilin Gao (University of Essex) Contemporary Engagement and Gender Dynamics in Chinese Children's Literature in Post-One-Child Policy Era Runyuan Bai (University of St Andrews) Struggles of Modern Chinese Female Translators in Indirect Translation: A Case Study of Fengxian Nüshi and Meirenshe Mengjin Xue (University of York)
13:00-14:30 Session B	AFT		Film Screening Chair: Max Duncan	<i>Made in Ethiopia: Up Close and Personal with Chinese Investment in Africa</i> (2024)
	SBB Foyer	Break		
14:45-16:15 Session C	SBB LT2	C0301	Global China: Culture, Economy and Digital Dialogues Chair: Holly Snape	Navigating Polarization: Understanding Twitter's Dialogue on China in a Competitive Global Context Wei-Feng Tzeng and Hsin-Hsien Wang (National Chengchi University) A Review of Hybrid Culture in Chinese Multinational: A Case Study of Lenovo Jingwen Jiang (University of Birmingham) What Enables the Action? The Capabilities Formation in Peripheral China's Path Creation Hao Chen (University of Glasgow) From Canton to Leith: Scottish Tea Merchants and the Globalisation of Sino-British Trade (1845–1855) Huirong Cheng (University of Edinburgh)
14:45-16:15 Session C	SBB 0.02	C0302	Gendered Issues: Ageing, Body and Sexual Identity Chair: Lin Feng	Chinese Male Stardom and Cosmetics: The Male Body, Masculinities and the Postfeminist Culture in China Yixuan Feng (independent)

				<p>Gendering Dongbei: Ageing Masculinities and Northeast China in The Long Season Min Xu (Durham University)</p> <p>Managing Bleeding: Menstruation and Women's Regulated Bodies in 20th Century China Ruoyu Jia (Durham University)</p> <p>Subtext and Subculture in Chinese Lesbian Fandom: Negotiating Identity Between Mainstream Media and Baihe Communities Ziyi Wang (University of Sheffield)</p>
<p>14:45-16:15</p> <p>Session C</p>	SBB 1.01	C0303	<p>Social Media, Community Building and National Security</p> <p>Chair: David Christopher</p>	<p>Network of Necessity: Social Media, and Community Resilience in Shanghai's 2022 Lockdown Yiling Wang (University of Edinburgh)</p> <p>Negotiating Visibility: Chinese Female Influencers' Self-Presentation Strategies in the MCN-Dominated Douyin Ecosystem Danni Tang (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University)</p> <p>Strategic Adaptation in the Digital Age: The Symbiotic Relationship Between State Control and We-media in China Cong Nie (University of Sheffield)</p> <p>'Xueba Couples': Meritocratic Romance and the Politics of Soft Paternalistic Model-Making Propaganda in China Shidai Zhang (University of Cambridge) and Chen Li (Chinese University of Hong Kong)</p>
<p>14:45-16:15</p> <p>Session C</p>	SBB 1.02	C0304	<p>Identity in Diaspora and Cultural Heritage</p> <p>Chair: Licheng Qian</p>	<p>British Chinese Life Writing: Individuality, Collectivity, and Pluralised Diasporic Chinese Identity Shenghao Hu (Queen Mary University of London)</p> <p>Kang Youwei's forgotten American colony Hugo Wong (independent)</p> <p>The Sustainability of Intangible Cultural Heritage in China: The Case of Taohuawu Woodblock Prints</p>

				<p>Zihao Wang (University of Leeds)</p> <p>Cultural Heritage and Technical Milestone: The Global Success of Black Myth: Wukong Maggie Li (University for Creative Arts)</p>
<p>14:45-16:15</p> <p>Session C</p>	SBB 1.03	C0305	<p>Gender and Feminism: Representation and Decision</p> <p>Chair: Wayne Wong</p>	<p>Cross-Gender Performance in Chinese Opera: Theatricality, Conventionalization and Codified Aesthetics Bette Zhaoyi Yan (University of Oxford)</p> <p>Gendered Phenomenon of Remigration Choice: A Case from China's Internal Migration Luping Wang (University of York)</p> <p>Beyond the Human: Daoism, Ecofeminism and Cross-Species Co-Creation in Multimedia Art Jiatong Han (University of Glasgow)</p>
<p>14:45-16:15</p> <p>Session C</p>	SBB 1.04	C0306 [P]	<p>Chinese Citizenship in the New Era</p> <p>Chair: Canglong Wang</p>	<p>The Emergence of Confucian-Civic Discourse: Exploring Strategies for Rationalizing Civic Actions among Confucian Education Activists in Contemporary China Canglong Wang (University of Brighton)</p> <p>The “Speechlessness” of Successful Players in Social Struggles: An Exploration of Two Suspended Civil Rights-Related Legal Drafts and Their Associated Gaming Processes Weinan Wang (University of Kent)</p> <p>Strategic Narratives and the Linguistic Dilemma of Citizenship in China: State-Controlled Discourse and Citizen Identity after 2012 Yang Li (Ghent University)</p> <p>Gendered Citizenship in China: Investigating Chinese Young Women’s Identities from Urban Areas of China Siqi Zhang (University of Strathclyde)</p> <p>Citizenship Education with Chinese Characteristics: The Role of Ideological-Political Education in Nurturing Students’ Social Engagement Yaobin Tong (Shenzhen University)</p>

14:45-16:15 Session C	SBB 2.03	C0307 [O]	Gender Expression and Resistance Chair: Hongwei Bao	<p>Precarious Freedom: Rural Women and Individual Ethics in Post-1990s Chinese Native-soil Narratives Yi Fu (University of Edinburgh)</p> <p>Challenging Gender Norms: Cross-Dressing and Female Resistance in Ming Dynasty Novel Menghe Tian (Dong Hua University)</p> <p>Korean Popular Culture and the Chinese Young Men's Body Aesthetics in the Context of Consumer Identities in Contemporary Urban China Haiqing Li (Curtin University)</p> <p>Patriarchal Order Discipline in the Construction of Female Identity: Gender Expression in Contemporary Chinese Feminist Films Anran Zheng (Queen's University)</p>
14:45-16:15 Session C	SBB 2.04	C0308 [P]	Drifting Meanings: Everyday Objects, Religious Practices, and Border Encounters in Taiwan-China Relations Chair: Song-Chuan Chen Discussant: Niki Joseph Paul Alsford	<p>Waterborne Deities in Matsu: Lore and Sites of Grassroots Cross-Strait Religious Interactions Song-Chuan Chen (University of Warwick)</p> <p>Navigating with 'Unclean Things': Ghosts and Drifted Waste on the Beaches of Kinmen Chengyu Yang (University of Bristol)</p> <p>How Politics Permeates the Everyday: An Ethnographic Case Study of Chinese Cotton Dolls in Taiwan Hsiao-Chen J. Lin (SOAS University of London)</p>
14:45-16:15 Session C	SBB 2.05	C0309	Popular Culture and Modern Interpretation Chair: Wayne Wong	<p>New Direction for Tibetan Commercial Cinema? Examining Western and Crime Genre in Jigme Trinley's Tibetan Film Adaptation 'One and Four (2023)' Luodeng Ouyang (University of Liverpool)</p> <p>Audience Laughter and Cultural Power Shifts: Decanonizing Cao Yu's Thunderstorm in Contemporary China Qi Yang (University College London)</p>

				<p>From the UK to China: Hobbyist-led Localization of the Tabletop Wargame Warhammer 40K through a Practice-Based Approach Roland (Ruotao) Wang and Peilin Li (University of Leicester)</p> <p>Moving Bodies, Training Hearts: Love and Intimacy in 1997's Youth Idol Dramas of Post-Socialist China Quan Zhang (University of Reading)</p>
14:45-16:15 Session C	SBB 2.08	C0310	<p>Local Agency and Institutional Structures: Governance, Adaptation, and Conflict in Chinese Societies (18th–20th Centuries) Chair: Shirley Ye</p>	<p>Is Corruption a Tax? 'Illegal' Fees, Daily taxation and Local finances Gongcheng Yang (University of Warwick)</p> <p>The Social Adaptation of Hakka Immigrants in Taihe, Guangzhou During the Mid-Qing Dynasty Xianxian Dai (University of Warwick)</p> <p>Banking Failure and Regulatory Reform on the Periphery: The Kwong Yik Bank in the British Straits Settlements Jeremy Goh (University of Warwick)</p>
16:15-16:30	SBB Foyer	Break		
16:30-17:30	SBB LT1	Keynote discussion Chair: Cindy Yu	<p>The Future of Sino-British Relations Professor Kerry Brown and Professor Steve Tsang</p>	

D2: Thursday, 4 September 2025

Time	Room	Panel ID	Panel Title and Chair	Papers
09:15-10:45 Session D	SBB LT2	D0401	<p>Local Development: Material and Consciousness Chair: Holly Snape</p>	<p>Re-narration and Remaking, China's Cultural Discourse on the Silk Road—A Case Study of the Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor World Heritage Designation Sofia (Jing) Jing (Chinese University of Hong Kong)</p> <p>Lighting Rivers and Banks: Lightscares in Changsha and Wuhan Federica Mirra (Birmingham City University)</p> <p>Enhancing International Communication of Chinese Local Culture Through TCSOL: A Case Study Hongwei Liu (Hebei University of Engineering) and Meng Wang (University of Hull)</p>

09:15-10:45 Session D	SBB 0.02	D0402	Education in Question Chair: Chris Berry	<p>Parents' Educational Involvement in the Summer Holidays: A Study based on Interviews with 32 Families in Shanghai Leiping Bao (Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences) and Rachel Murphy (University of Oxford)</p> <p>Blankets of Leaves and Treasure in the Soil: Reconsidering Early Childhood Education and Care in Urban China through Children's Public Park Intra-action Bonan Liu (Münster University)</p> <p>Social Transformation through Labor: Lida Xueyuan and Its Rural Education Department Duncan Brouwer (University of Hawai'i)</p> <p>Stay-at-home fathers and early education: co-learning, cultivating values and negotiating co-Parenting Fei Huang (University of St Andrews)</p>
09:15-10:45 Session D	SBB 1.01	D0403	Buddhism: Operation and Representation Chair: David Christopher	<p>Monitored by Officials, Managed by Buddhist Monks (督以官，守以僧): Revisiting the Cooperation between Government Officials and Buddhist Monks in Charity Work in the Song Macro (Ming Ho) Lam (SOAS University of London)</p> <p>Becoming Image: Buddhist Ontology and the Spatial Consciousness of King Hu's Films Dailin Zhao (King's College London)</p> <p>The Impact and Response of Japanese Buddhism's Expansion in China Around the Boxer Rebellion (主权与教权：庚子事变前后日本佛教在华传播的冲击与回应) Tingyu Zhou (Shanghai University)</p> <p>Fundraising, Donations and the Economy of Buddhist Book Publishing in Modern China Gregory Adam Scott (University of Manchester)</p>
09:15-10:45 Session D	SBB 1.02	D0404	From Ming to Qing: Spirituality, Morality, and Mental Mapping Chair: Weiming Gao	<p>Hyperfeminine Desire: Affection, Desire and Female Ghosts in Ming-Qing Illustrated Texts Peiyuan Deng (SOAS University of London)</p> <p>Constructing Moral Space: The Spiritual World in Late Ming and Early Qing's Prose on Literati Studio Heung Sing Lee (Hong Kong University)</p> <p>Navigators of the East: Mental Maps and the Dissemination of Maritime Knowledge in the Qing Empire</p>

				<p>Sijian Wang (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa)</p> <p>Late Qing Circulation and Sponsorship Networks of Quanjie Lu (Record of Exhortations and Admonitions)</p> <p>Katherine L. Alexander (University of Colorado, Boulder)</p>
<p>09:15-10:45</p> <p>Session D</p>	SBB 1.03	D0405 [P]	<p>Beyond the Margins: Commentary as Intellectual Inquiry, Political Tool and Aesthetic Dialogue</p> <p>Chair: Andrea Janku</p>	<p>The Wondrous Foundation 妙本 Miaoben and the Dao: The Evolution of Miaoben in Sui-Tang Commentaries on the Daodejing</p> <p>Yinlin Guan (University of Edinburgh)</p> <p>Careless Laying up of Things Excites to Robbery: Reasonable Victim-Blaming Comments on Dianshizhai Pictorial in The Late Qing</p> <p>Yiming Zhao (University of Edinburgh)</p> <p>Dialogues with the Works of Ancient Masters: Commentaries as a Method to Resolve Crises</p> <p>Shiqi Cai (University of Edinburgh)</p> <p>Dissolving Sound and Sight: Commentaries on Du Fu's Poetry and Their Dialogue with Visual Arts During Ming-Qing Transition</p> <p>Deyi Zhang (University of California, Davis and Nanjing University)</p>
<p>09:15-10:45</p> <p>Session D</p>	SBB 1.04	D0406	<p>State Control, Censorship and In-between Authority</p> <p>Chair: Wayne Wong</p>	<p>Newspapers in 1957: Censoring and diversifying media during the Hundred Flowers Movement</p> <p>Ivi Fung (University of Oxford)</p> <p>State Censorship and the Cross-cultural Reception of danmei in the international online fandom</p> <p>Xiuqi Huang (University of Edinburgh)</p> <p>Philanthropic Authoritarianism: Targeted Governance of Philanthropy in Xi's China</p> <p>Wei-feng Tzeng and Hsin-hsien Wang (National Chengchi University)</p>
<p>09:15-10:45</p> <p>Session D</p>	SBB 2.03	D0407 [P, O]	<p>From Ghosts to Flags: Media, Memory and Kinship Across Queer Sinophone Spheres</p> <p>Chair: Lin Feng</p>	<p>Dead Queer, Happy Ending and Ghost Culture: A Critical Inquiry into the Emerging Taiwanese Queer Cinema</p> <p>Jie Zhou (University of California, Los Angeles)</p> <p>All Shall Be Well: Reimagining Queer Kinship and the Generative Power of Melancholia</p> <p>Peihua Yue (Duke University)</p>

				Silence Screaming: Alternative Gender Flags at Music Festivals in China Xinyao Li (Columbia University)
09:15-10:45 Session D	SBB 2.04	D0408	Philosophies Across Time Chair: Licheng Qian	The Awareness of Time in Tang Xianzu’s Eight-Legged Essay and the Exploration of Life Philosophy in His ‘Four Dreams of Linchuan’ Tsz Wing Giovanna Wu (Education University of Hong Kong) ‘The Usefulness of Uselessness’: Zhuangzi’s Resistance to Instrumental Rationality and Its Limits Qian Li (Tsinghua University) The Unattainable Ideal from China to the World: Daoist Philosophy, Martial Arts and their Global Appeal through Martial Arts Cinema Nan Zhou (University of Southampton) Laozi as Supporting the Welfare State: A Hermeneutics of Intention Michael Schonken (Tsinghua University)
09:15-10:45 Session D	SBB 2.05	D0409	Teachers and Teaching Chair: Hongwei Bao	Lao She as an Overseas Chinese Language Teacher in the UK Weiqun (Victoria) Wang (University of Nottingham) A Framework for Applying ChatGPT in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language: Practices and Insights Lulu Jiang (Shanghai International Studies University) Teachers Before Students: Geography Textbooks and Teacher’s Guides, Nation-Building and Emotions about China’s Manchuria, 1901-1937 Cruz (Wenhao) Guan (The Ohio State University)
10:45-11:00	SBB Foyer	Break		
11:00-12:00	SBB LT1	Keynote speech Chair: Chris Berry		Testing the Canon: Digital Scholarship and Early Cinema in Hong Kong Professor Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh
12:00-13:00	Freemen’s Kitchen & Bar	Lunch break		
13:00-14:30 Session E	SBB LT1	E0500	Motherhood and Women Chair: Lin Feng	Motherhood on Screen: How Chinese Family Dramas Shape Women’s Motherhood-Related Choices Lingjun Wang (University of Leeds)

				<p>Reframing Voices: The Shifting Power Dynamics Between Chinese Women Researchers and Their Female Oral History Participants, 1992–2022 Huili Meng (Nottingham Trent University)</p> <p>Cultural Barriers to Divorced Single Mothers’ Physical Activity Participation in China Chunhong Zhou and Győző Molnár (University of Worcester)</p> <p>Chang’e as a Feminine Archetype: A Mythological and Cross-Cultural Analysis João Marcelo Mesquita Martins (University of Minho)</p>
<p>13:00-14:30</p> <p>Session E</p>	SBB LT2	E0501	<p>Historical Ethics, Transmission, New interpretation and Translation</p> <p>Chair: Flavia Fang</p>	<p>Layers of Sediments across the Twentieth Century: The ‘Chameleon Quality’ in Translation in Reform-era China Ziling Bai (Huazhong University of Science and Technology)</p> <p>Paratexts as Re-shaping: Exploring Cultural Memories Based on the Cases of David Roy’s Translation of Jin Ping Mei Yun Shi (Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University)</p> <p>Interaction between Literature and Film and the National Imagination: A Study on the Association between Film Adaptations of Tang Legends and One Hundred Years of Chinese Cinema (1903-2023) Jie Li (Hunan Normal University), co-author: Meiding Wang (Communication University of China)</p>
<p>13:00-14:30</p> <p>Session E</p>	SBB 0.02	E0502	<p>Religions on the Margin: Atheism, Afterlife and Islam</p> <p>Chair: Yiming Song</p>	<p>Constructing the Fantasy Tang in Atheistic China Fengyi Sun (University of Zurich)</p> <p>The Chinese Catechism: Instrumentalisation of Contemporary Holocaust Commemoration Yuang Marcus Liu (King’s College London)</p> <p>Global Knowledge Co-creation and the Left-wing Chinese Christian Theology of Wu Yaozong, c.1919-39 Duanran Feng (University of Oxford)</p> <p>The Representational Force of China’s Public Diplomacy Discourse: An Analysis of China Global Television Network’s Legitimation Strategies of Its Claims on Xinjiang and Islam Ibrahim Akbas (University of Nottingham Ningbo China)</p>

13:00-14:30 Session E	SBB 1.01	E0503	Power Dynamics in Classrooms and Textbooks Chair: Rachel Murphy	<p>'Study Well Math, Physics and Chemistry and You can Walk around the World Unafraid' Academia as State Project, Counterrevolutionary Threat and Resistance in the PRC since 1949 Martin Albrecht Haenig (City University of Hong Kong)</p> <p>Exploring Classroom Silence: Micro-Power Dynamics and Group Dynamics in Chinese University EFL Settings Xinyi Wang (University of Leicester)</p> <p>ELT in Chinese General Senior High School: An Analysis of Chinese ELT Textbooks Francesco Scaringella (University of Milan)</p>
13:00-14:30 Session E	SBB 1.02	E0504 [P]	The Politics of an Aesthetics of Medium: Intersections of History and Society in Chinese Comics Chair/Discussant: Annabella Mei Massey	<p>Artistic Identity and Gender Dynamics: Wang Shuhui (1912-1985) and Her Gentlewomen in Ancient-Costume <i>Lianhuanhua</i> Chihho Lin (National Palace Museum)</p> <p>Reading <i>Lianhuanhua</i> in Shanghai: Disappearing Comic Bookstalls and Street Bookshops as Sites of Fandom Culture Jiu Song (Heidelberg University)</p> <p>The Bad, the Poor and the Smart: the Roles of Americans in Fang Cheng's Comic Strips for Manhua Magazine Mariia Guleva (Charles University)</p> <p>Visual Politics of Historical Representation: A Comparative Study of Chinese Communist Party Anniversary Comics, 1951-2011 Damian Mandzunowski (Heidelberg University)</p>
13:00-14:30 Session E	SBB 1.03	E0505 [P]	Chinese Women in the Digital Age: Identity, Empowerment and Feminism Chair: Liying Mi	<p>Renegotiating Woman Dentities: The Tension between Media Consumption and Feminisms in Contemporary China Xiaoyu Zhang (University of York)</p> <p>'Money is the Vote': Women's Sanitary Pads Movement in China Yaquan Liang (University of Edinburgh)</p> <p>A New Channel for Mate Selection? Analyzing the 'Self-Saving' Matchmaking Phenomenon Among Chinese Female PhD Students Abroad on Social Media Yilin Wang (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology) and Kun Bai (Newcastle University)</p>

				<p>My Digital Boyfriend: Exploring Women's Experience of Intimacy and Love in Chinese Women-oriented Games Luna Yihan Fu, Xingyi Li and Liying Mi (University of Leeds)</p>
<p>13:00-14:30 Session E</p>	SBB 1.04	E0506	<p>Utopia, Dystopia and Grassroot Rural Areas Chair: Helena Lopes</p>	<p>Dreaming Together: Utopian Communes in pre-Communist China, 1919-1921 Shakhar Rahav (University of Haifa)</p> <p>In Search of Utopia: Li Rui's Journey from Mao's Servant to Champion of Democracy from the 1930s to the 2000s Verna Yu (University of Oxford)</p>
<p>13:00-14:30 Session E</p>	SBB 2.03	E0507 [P, H]	<p>Between Worlds: Cultural Encounters in China's Borderlands Chair: Yan Ying</p>	<p>Cultural Synthesis and Transmission: The Localisation of Duan Gong Belief among the Weining Miao in Guizhou Ziran Tang (SOAS University of London)</p> <p>Reimagining Borders: The Shifting Perception of Japan Among Late Qing Manchu Intellectuals Elizabeth Xiao Lin (SOAS University of London)</p> <p>Popcorn of the Sacred-Tracing Molianzhe in Buddhist Translations and Rituals Nan Ni (SOAS University of London)</p>
<p>13:00-14:30 Session E</p>	SBB 2.04	E0508	<p>Migration Policies and Wolf Warrior Chair: Chris Berry</p>	<p>The Descendants of Immigrants to China: The Lived Experiences and Negotiation of Identity Chengzhi Zhang (University of Manchester)</p> <p>Global Norm or 'Protecting Compatriots'? China's Policies of Migration Control in the 1930s Yui Chim Lo (University of Manchester)</p> <p>Historical Foundations of Today's 'Wolf Warrior': Reexplaining China's Nationalist Diplomacy in the Xi Jinping Era Shaped by Confucianist Honour Zhen Zhang (University of Edinburgh)</p> <p>Exploring Views on Chinese 'Wolf Warrior Diplomacy' through X Posts (2019-2024) Liane Marques Ferreira (University of Lisbon)</p>
<p>13:00-14:30 Session E</p>	SBB 2.05	E0509	<p>Women and Gendered Representation in Chinese Culture: Myth, Literature, and Society</p>	<p>Flow as Genre: Liu, Fixed Tropes, and Transcultural Lexicon in Chinese Internet Literature Xinyue Zhang (University of Hong Kong)</p> <p>Rethinking Social Precarity of Chinese Rural Migrant Workers in the Pearl River Delta Region Zhiwei Huang (University College London)</p>

			Chair: Lauren Walden	Flying Devas as a Co-creation: Tracing Multicultural Influences in Northern Wei Grottoes Xueyu Wen (Ghent University) From Fox to Human Being: Identity Transformation of Female Yao in Liaozhai Zhiyi Ang Li (University of Stirling)
14:00-17:00 Session E	AFT		Film Screening Chair: Neal Robbins	<i>Taiwan Undaunted: In Search of the Nation that Cannot Call itself a Nation</i> (documentary, 2024)
14:30-14:45	SBB Foyer	Break		
14:45-16:15 Session F	SBB 0.02	F0602 [P]	The Contemporary Chinese Popular Culture in Cross-cultural Mobility Chair: Weiming Gao	Fantasies of Heterotopia: The Wandering Earth's Chinese Nostalgia and Life Narrative Qiunuo Hu (University of Exeter) Jiuzhou: An Oriental Fantasy World in Cross-Cultural Mobility Jiayin Yang (University of Freiburg) Weird Fiction and Chinese web Science Fiction <i>Lord of the Mysteries</i> (诡秘之主): Connections, Influences and Innovations Weiming Gao (University of Freiburg) 'The External Flow of Rivers Through the Ages': Contered on Changleyi: The Golden Age as I Desire Jiangfeng Hu and Xi Yang (Capital Normal University)
14:45-16:15 Session F	SBB 1.01	F0603	Digital China Chair: Licheng Qian	Propaganda Posters for a New Era? Expanding Genres and Aesthetics in the Digital PRC Benjamin Davies (Lund University) From Disenchantment to <i>Qu Mei</i> : Re-enchantment on Xiaohongshu's Algorithmic Life Xiaoyu Pu (Kingston University) Negotiating a Less Unsettling Past: Official Memory in the Chinese COVID-19 Digital Museum Liangzuo Hao (Loughborough University) Study of Prosody in Chinese Classical Poetry from a Perspective of Digital Humanities Gary Tsang (Hong Kong Metropolitan University)
14:45-16:15 Session F	SBB 1.02	F0604 [P]	The Aesthetics of a Political Medium:	Chen Guangyi or the Shifting Aesthetics of <i>Lianhuanhua</i> around 1949

			<p>Intersections of Visual Culture and Literature in Chinese Comics</p> <p>Chair/Discussant: Elizabeth Emrich-Rougé</p>	<p>Norbert Danysz (Institut d'Asie Orientale, Université Lumière Lyon and Interactions, Transfers, and Artistic and Cultural Ruptures (INTRU) research unit at the Université de Tours)</p> <p>Force of examples: Children's <i>Lianhuanhua</i> from the Cultural Revolution Period Astrid Xiao (Heidelberg University)</p> <p>Hiding in Plain Sight: Huang Yongyu's Satirical Animal Cartoons in a 1980 <i>Lianhuanhua</i> Adaptation of Little Smarty Visits the Future Nick Stember (National Museum of Denmark)</p> <p>Shaping the New Socialist Woman: Gender and Voice in <i>Lianhuanhua</i> Aijia Zhang (Heidelberg University)</p>
14:45-16:15 Session F	SBB 1.03	F0605	<p>Rituals, Traditions and Social Practices</p> <p>Chair: Natascha Gentz</p>	<p>Disruption of Tradition Through the Reconceptualisation of Geren (Individual): New Interpretation of the 'Chinese vs. Western' Cultural Debate in Early 20th Century China Weiyu Yuan (Durham University)</p> <p>The Decline of the Concept of Humbling Dwelling: A Modern Transformation Yuwen Zhang (KU Leuven)</p> <p>Daigou as a Social Practice Yao Xu (University of Leicester)</p>
14:45-16:15 Session F	SBB 1.04	F0606	<p>Modernities, Modernism and Modern China</p> <p>Chair: Hongwei Bao</p>	<p>Negotiating Modernities: The Tracksuit and Power in Globalising China (1980s–Present) Keyi Zhang (University of Arts London)</p> <p>British Cataloguing and Classification of Yuan Zaju: A Comparative Bibliographical Perspective on the Modern Transformation of Chinese Literature Jing Tan (Xi'an Jiaotong University)</p> <p>'The English Bourgeois Revolution' as a Political Discourse in Modern China Li Hu (Beijing Normal University)</p> <p>Toy Flânerie: Exploring Xi Xi's Modernist Engagement with Toys CT (Chung-to) Au (University of Hong Kong)</p>
14:45-16:15 Session F	SBB 2.03	F0607 [H]	<p>Nation, Transnational Exchange and Trade</p>	<p>From Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon to Word of Honor: Wuxia as a Cross-cultural Bridge Maria Szafrńska-Chmielarz (University of Warsaw)</p>

			Chair: Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh	<p>Intermediation, Translation and Governance: The Formation of an Intermediary Order in the Amoy Trade between China and England, 1683–1690 Wenhao Guo (Sun Yat-Sen University)</p> <p>Navigating Ideological Frontiers: A Transnational Analysis of How Yukong Moved the Mountains and Socialist Propaganda Yangyang Xu (New York University)</p> <p>The Role of Chinese Provinces in the Belt and Road Initiative (Francesca Chapman, Linda Calabrese and Rebecca Nadin) Francesca Chapman (University of Leeds)</p>
14:45-16:15 Session F	SBB 2.04	F0608 [P]	<p>The Long Second World War in China: Mobilization, Reconstruction, and Sino-Japan Relations</p> <p>Chair: Nora Yitong Qiu Commentator: Helena Lopes</p>	<p>War of Everyone Against Everyone: Company Power and Military Violence in Coastal Jiangsu, 1937-1945 Mingran Cao (Leiden University)</p> <p>Violence of the Invalid: Displaced ‘Wounded Soldiers’ in China’s Long Second World War Hanzhi Dai (University of Edinburgh)</p> <p>Fissures in the Red Alliance: The Beijing Airport Incident and the Demise of Sino-Japanese Communist Networks On I Lam (University of Cambridge)</p>
14:45-16:15 Session F	SBB 2.05	F0609	<p>Archaeology, Material Documents, and Sensory/Historical Experience in Early and Medieval China</p> <p>Chair: Roland Wang</p>	<p>Towards a Purpose in the Placement of Decision-making-manuscripts in Early Chinese Tombs Caitlin Kowalski (University of Edinburgh)</p> <p>Scholarship and Collecting Practice of Chinese Mingqi during the 1890s to the 1930s Yifan Qiu (SOAS University of London)</p> <p>The Painted Archive: The Documentational Role of Cinnabar Pigments in Shang Oracle Bones Peichao Qin (University of Cambridge)</p> <p>Tastes of the Tides: Seafood and the Changing Maritime Experience in Tang China Flavia Xi Fang (SOAS University of London)</p>
14:45-16:15 Session F	SBB 2.08	F0610	<p>Translation: From the West to the East</p> <p>Chair: Yan Ying</p>	<p>Translating the West: Fu Yunlong and His Textual Seasickness Jennifer (Junwa) Lau (University of Toronto Mississauga)</p>

				<p>Translating Yeats into Chinese: Analyzing Source and Target Cultures from a Glottodidactic Perspective Agnieszka Wójcicka (Adam Mickiewicz University)</p> <p>Translator's Dilemmas: Some Observations on Louis de Poirot's Different Translations of the Same Biblical Terms into Chinese Wojciech Rybka (Fu Jen Catholic University)</p> <p>The Variation of the Western Translations of Chinese Classics in the 17th-19th Century: A Case Study of The Great Learning Di Niu (Tsinghua University)</p>
16:15-16:30	SBB Foyer	Break		
<p>16:30-17:45 Session G</p> <p>[shorter session]</p>	SBB 0.02	G0702	<p>Revisit Mao-era: Construction and Institution</p> <p>Chair: Gerda Wielander</p>	<p>Documenting the Third Front Railway: Construction, Operation, Legacy Paul Kendall (University of Westminster)</p> <p>Material Practice and Local Experience: The Construction and Evolution of the Shanghai Film Industry System in Early Socialist China (1949–1965) Yaping Pu (Xiamen University)</p> <p>Institutional Persistence and New Social Practices in the De-Danwei Era Jiajing Huang (University of Kassel)</p>
<p>16:30-17:45 Session G</p> <p>[shorter session]</p>	SBB 1.01	G0703	<p>Mobility, Policy, and Identity in Contemporary China</p> <p>Chair: Lauren Walden</p>	<p>Deploying Bespoke Mobility Capital in Post-Deng Xiaoping China: The Transnational Experiences of Young Privileged Chinese Entrepreneurs in the United Kingdom Wenfu Zhang (University of Warwick)</p> <p>How was it Retrenched? The Politics of China's Pension Reform for Public Sector Employees Zihui Xie (University of Glasgow)</p> <p>Colonial Legacies and Self-Identification: The Significance of 'Miao' vs. 'Hmong' in Academic and Community Discourse Olena Bogdanova (Lviv National Academy of Arts)</p>
<p>16:30-17:45 Session G</p> <p>[shorter session]</p>	SBB 1.02	G0704	<p>Heroes and Ordinary People</p> <p>Chair: Lin Feng</p>	<p>Heroism Across Cultures: A Comparative Study of Riders of the Purple Sage and The Legend of the Condor Heroes Guanwei Zhu (University of Strathclyde)</p>

				<p>The Return of the Iconic Chinese Comic and Cartoon Heroes: An (Unexpected) Reunion on Ice and Snow Giovanna Puppini (University of Genoa)</p> <p>Ordinary People and Disaster Culture – A Study of Four Chinese Nonfictions Kerou Zhang (University of Nottingham)</p>
<p>16:30-17:45 Session G</p> <p>[shorter session]</p>	SBB 1.03	G0705	<p>Hong Kong: Ritual Texts, Poetry and Print</p> <p>Chair: Yan Ying</p>	<p>Examining the Permeability of Popular Buddhism and Popular Daoism through a Study of Jiao Ritual Text Collections of a Hong Kong Chaozhou Buddhist Society Yee Ting Wong (Chinese University of Hong Kong)</p> <p>Connected under the Tradition of Poetry: A Glimpse of the 1950s to 1960s Poetry Events in Hong Kong Wai Tsui (Chinese University of Hong Kong)</p> <p>Twisted Growth: Chinese Businessmen and Cultural Production in Colonial Hong Kong, 1920-1939 Wing Lam Michelle Chan (University of Oxford)</p>
<p>16:30-17:45 Session G</p> <p>[shorter session]</p>	SBB 1.04	G0706	<p>Sex, Family Bonds and Mentally Disabled Parents</p> <p>Chair: Jocelyn Xu</p>	<p>Pillow Princess or Passive Dominance? The Agency within and Beyond the Bedroom Xun Ril Li (University of Toronto) and Yin Zhang (Université de Genève)</p> <p>Socialist Knitting: Remaking Family Bonds, Consumption Aesthetics, and Social Relations in Maoist China He Sun (Hong Kong Polytechnic University)</p> <p>De-stigmatization: A Case Study on Chinese Art Brut Therapy Narratives and Their Impact on Mentally Disabled Patients Yixuan Chen (Ohio State University)</p>
<p>16:30-17:45 Session G</p> <p>[shorter session]</p>	SBB 2.03	G0707 [P, O]	<p>Gender in Transition: Women's Local Context, Diversity, and Action in the Jiangnan Region from the Late Qing Dynasty to the People's Republic of China</p> <p>Chair: Helena Lopes</p>	<p>How Women Engage with the Field of Science: The Animal and Plant World of Women in Jiangnan in the Modern Era Xinwei Ni (Fudan University)</p> <p>Gender Consumption and Diversified Business Models in Late Qing and Early Republican Playgrounds Yarong Xu (East China Normal University)</p>

				Gender, Revolution, and Social Networks: Hu Shi-yin's Women's Movement in Wenzhou during the 1920s Jiayue Lin (Fudan University)
16:30-17:45 Session G [shorter session]	SBB 2.04	G0708	Economy, Importation and Market Chair: Wang Weinan	From the Summer Palace to the Saloni: How Industrialisation and Maritime Progress Made Chinoiserie a Popular Import in Cyprus Charlotte Steffen (Limassol Pasticheion Municipal Museum, Historical Archive and Research Centre) Market, Values and Ethical Dilemma: Cross-Strait Taiwanese Enterprises in Regional Tensions Michelle Tsai (National Chung Cheng University)
16:30-17:45 Session G [shorter session]	SBB 2.05	G0709	Incident and International Relationship Chair: Peilin Li	The Lincheng Incident (1923): A Turning Point in China-West Relations? Olga V. Alexeeva (Université du Québec à Montréal) In the Name of IRA, Japanese Anti-British Campaign in 1939 Peilin Li (University of Leicester) Expansion and Division: Indigenous Clergy and Fractured Geographies of the Russian Orthodox Mission in China, 1860s-1930s Anastasiia Akulich (University of Leeds)
16:30-17:45 Session G [shorter session]	SBB 2.08	G0710 [P]	Scepticism, Satire and Sensuality: Popular Discourses on Buddhist and Daoist Religion Across Different Periods in China Chair: Hongwei Bao	Religious Belief or Secular Pursuit? Re-assessing Wang Yangming's Daoist Experience Yizhu Li (University of Edinburgh) Subversive Representations of Buddhist and Daoist Monks in Late Imperial Chinese Jokes: A Study of Expanded Forest of Laughs Di Zhang (University of Edinburgh) A Female Poet, Courtesan, Daoist Nun, Bisexual, and Murderess: The Erotic Remaking of Yu Xuanji in <i>An Amorous Woman of Tang Dynasty</i> Yixuan Huang (University of Edinburgh)

D3: Friday, 5 September 2025

Time	Room	Panel ID	Panel Title and Chair	Papers
09:00-10:00	SBB0.03			BACS Council meeting (Council members and members-elect only)

10:00-11:30 Session H	SBB LT1	H0800	<p>The Past and Present of Taiwan</p> <p>Chair: Helena Lopes</p>	<p>Information Circulation and Governance in 19th-Century Taiwan: Local Officials and Frontier Policies as the Focus Wei Wang (National Taiwan University)</p> <p>Narratives of Self: Constructing Taiwanese Identity through the National Palace Museum's Cultural Tapestry Jiaqi Wang (Sciences Po Paris)</p> <p>Challenges and Decentralisation of the Chinese Postal Service in Postwar Taiwan Ling-Chieh Chen (National Taiwan Normal University)</p> <p>The Pragmatism of Ideology: Taiwan's Overseas Chinese Policy in Malaya and the Republic of Vietnam, c.1949-65 Adrian Kwong (University of Oxford)</p>
10:00-11:30 Session H	SBB 0.02	H0802	<p>Mao and Revolutionary Legacy</p> <p>Chair: Paul Kendall</p>	<p>Revolutionary Style/Natural Style: Building Animal Enclosures at the Beijing Zoo, c. 1952-1960 Yutong Li (University of Cambridge)</p> <p>Exporting Mao: The Guoji Shudian and the Transnational Distribution Networks and Routes through Western Europe (1953–1966) Luca Nigro (Scuola Normale Superiore)</p> <p>When the East Wind Blows: Maoist Principles in European Artistic Collectives in 1960-70s Ruoyi Zheng (University of Manchester)</p> <p>The CIA's Analysis into Mao Zedong's Succession and the Cultural Revolution Nick Miller (University of Edinburgh)</p>
10:00-11:30 Session H	SBB 1.01	H0803	<p>Guilt, Sprit and Identity Construction</p> <p>Chair: Lin Chihho</p>	<p>Official Culturalisation Strategies in the Shaping of Mongolian Identity in Inner Mongolia Yannan Li (Lancaster University)</p> <p>An Exploration of the Identity Construction of Frustrated Graduates from Elite Universities in China Chengzhe Yao (University of Glasgow)</p> <p>The Anxiety of 'Chan' (忏 · Kṣama or 'Repentance'): The Yuju Xinchan 玉局心忏 as a Confucian Ritual Text for Guilt Elimination Dingwei Guo (Freie Universität Berlin)</p>

				Zhengqi (争气, striving spirit), The Make of a Revolutionary Emotion Sijie Ren (University of Bristol)
10:00-11:30 Session H	SBB 1.03	H0805 [P]	Platform Change: 'Social' Media and Agency in Contemporary China Chair/Discussant: Gerda Wielander	Drawing Inspiration: Propaganda Poster Reference Materials and the Amateur Artist Avital Avina (SOAS University of London) Communist Hair and Xiaohongshu Clay: Remediating History in Digital Things Antonio Yijiao Guo (King's College London) 'Phantom Dreams': Factory Offspring's WeChat Nostalgia Videos for Factory Life Mingkun Li (King's College London) Artistic Defiance in the Age of Algorithms: Counter-Surveillance in Xi Jinping's China Shiyu Gao (Birmingham School of Art)
10:00-11:30 Session H	SBB 1.04	H0806	From Urban to Rural: Age, Gender and Migration Chair: Chang Xu	Affective Exploitation: Structured Melancholy Among Chinese Women Factory Workers Chengzhi Xiang (University of Bristol) A Fluid Culture: The Southbound Writers' Hong Kong Narratives Mo Li (University of Hong Kong) A Study on the Resilience of Migrant Families in China Hui Zhou (University of Sheffield)
10:00-11:30 Session H	SBB 2.03	H0807 [O]	Education, Intellectual Encounters, the Examination System and Cultural Capital Chair: Wang Weinan	Sino-European Intellectual Encounters: Enlightenment Construction of Confucianism and Qing Intellectual Engagement Xinyao Zhang (University College London) Metaphors about the Gaokao National Exam on Chinese Social Media Jiayue Yin (Lancaster University) An Inquiry into the Phenomenon of 'Misaligned Safeguarding' of Rural Cultural Traditions Under the Perspective of Cultural Capital: A Case Study of G Village in Si County, Anhui Province Jiahui Chen (Beijing Normal University) Harmony in Diversity: Where is the path forward for 'Chinese-style' modern education? Yuhan Wu (Beijing Normal University)

10:00-11:30 Session H	SBB 2.04	H0808 [P]	<p>Official and Vernacular Memories in Contemporary China</p> <p>Chair: Lichang Qian</p>	<p>Longing for a Liminal Kwotung: Transcultural Mediated Nostalgia on Instagram Yanning Chen (Loughborough University)</p> <p>Nostalgia and the State-led Localization of Industrial Heritage: A Case Study of the Jingdezhen Ceramic Industrial Heritage Museum in China Minghe Ma (Newcastle University)</p> <p>The Divisive Past and the Conflicted Other: How Chinese Netizens View Russia Yi Wang (University of Birmingham)</p> <p>Social Memory and China Studies: A Theoretical Analysis Licheng Qian (Birmingham City University)</p>
10:00-11:30 Session H	SBB 2.05	H0809	<p>Linguistic Diversity</p> <p>Chair: Yan Ying</p>	<p>The 'Soft Power' of Language(s): Cultural Politics of Representing Linguistic Diversity in CCTV 2023 National TV Host Competition Hao Xie (University of Warwick)</p> <p>The Linguistic Iceberg Model (LIM): An Innovative Systemic Approach to Ecolinguistics Analysis of Chinese Prefecture-level City Work Report Maria Stella Burgio (Ca' Foscari University of Venice and Beijing Normal University)</p> <p>A Flash in the Pan: On Taiwan's 2030 Bilingual Nation Policy Eric Chia-Hwan Chen (National Taipei University of Education)</p> <p>Queer/ing Translation: Mu Cao and His Poetry Hongwei Bao (University of Nottingham)</p>
10:00-11:30 Session H	SBB 2.08	H0810	<p>Art Delivery: From Paintings to History</p> <p>Chair: Lauren Walden</p>	<p>Collaborative, Circulation and Losing Control: Reorientation of Subjectivity from Museum to Community in Art Delivery 1.0 to 2.0 Jiaxin Gan (Pingshan Art Museum)</p> <p>'Moving Mountains and Filling in Valleys': Guohua, Soviet Constructivism and the Artist's Role in Socialist China Huiyu Cara Zhao (Durham University)</p> <p>Writing Chinese Art History in the Early Twentieth-Century China: the Artist as Art Historian Zi Wang (Beijing Foreign Studies University)</p>

				Giuseppe Castiglione's Paintings: The Transformation of European Art and the Formation of a New Genre in Eighteenth-century China Shuwen Wang (Manchester Metropolitan University)
11:30-11:45	SBB Foyer	Break		
11:45-12:45	SBB LT1	BACS AGM, plus ECR and Best Doctoral Thesis Award Ceremony		
12:45-13:45	Freemen's Kitchen & Bar	Lunch break		
13:45-15:15 Session I	SBB LT2	I0901	Ghosts, Mortality, the Imagination of the Afterlife and Heaven Chair: Peilin Li	Mapping the River of Hell: Changing Images of the Afterlife in Chinese Religious Thought Yifan Li (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich) Rediscovering Mortality: Philosophy of Life and Death in Early Medieval China Zixuan Pan (University of Edinburgh) Rethinking Xunzi's Argument against 'Legendary Abdications': A Focus on the Different Conceptions of 'Heaven' Junbo (Max) Tao (University of Hong Kong)
13:45-15:15 Session I	SBB 0.02	I0902	Traveling, Exploring and Mapping the China in the Past Chair: Helena Lopes	Space Constructed by Imagination and Aesthetics: A Case Study of The Complete Map of Sichuan in the 1740s Yuting Zhang (SOAS University of London) China in the Travel Literature of Brazil and Portugal: The Case of the Diplomatic Missions of the 1880's Bruno Pontes Motta (University of Lisbon) Joseph Needham and Rewi Alley's Scientific and Cultural Exploration in Northwest China During World War II Qibo Mei (Zhengzhou University) Repatriating Huaqiao from China in the Early Postwar Period (1945-1950) Xian Yu Jee (Royal Holloway)
13:45-15:15 Session I	SBB 1.01	I0903	Beyond Bitterness: Strategies for Reclaiming the Present in Contemporary China,	<u>Group A</u> 'And Then You Look up at the Sky and It is Blue!': Changing Imaginaries of the 'Good Life' of Chinese Youth in Portugal Olga Cojocar and Xuheng Wang (ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon) From Chiku to Tiaozhan: Zhejiangese Migrants Rethink Suffering, Success, and Sacrifice

			<p>Part I: Migration and Mobility</p> <p>Chair: Siyu Tang Discussant: Maria Nolan</p>	<p>Teresa Irigoyen-Lopez (University of Oxford)</p> <p><u>Group B</u> Navigating Constraint: The Lives of a Few Aesthetes and the Cult of Nature in Tujia Neofolklorism Giacomo Caruso (Hubei University for Nationalities)</p> <p>Desirable Differences: Backpackers 'Checking in' at a Chinese Temple in Dar es Salaam Theo Stapleton (University of Cambridge)</p>
13:45-15:15 Session I	SBB 1.02	I0904	<p>Resistance, Reconstruction and New Invention</p> <p>Chair: Lauren Walden</p>	<p>Visualizing China: Collective Participation and Reconstruction of National Identity in Chinese Gaming Communities Siming Huo (University of Sheffield)</p> <p>Between Compliance and Resistance: Chongqing's War of Resistance Memory in China's Authoritarian Memory Regime Sitao Deng (University of Oxford)</p> <p>Reconstructing 1980s Rural Women: The Platformisation of Nostalgic Femininities on Chinese Social Media Platform Kuaishou Ran Yan (Shenzhen University)</p>
13:45-15:15 Session I	SBB 1.03	I0905	<p>Chinese Cities, Regional Problems and Geographic Mobility</p> <p>Chair: Weiming Gao</p>	<p>Theatre as Business: A Study of the Triangular Relations among Shanxi Merchants' Business, Theatre Sponsorship and Social Status in Late Imperial China Yunjie (Lisa) Hu (University of Sydney)</p> <p>The Crisis of Ultra-Low Fertility in Northeast China: Micro and Macro Determinants in Jilin City Kaicheng Zhang (University of Sheffield)</p> <p>Transitional Justice with Chinese Characteristics: 'Lenient Handling' and Post-Cultural Revolution Settlements in Guangxi Guoqing Song (Anhui University)</p>
13:45-15:15 Session I	SBB 1.04	I0906 [P]	<p>Chinese Intellectuals in the Long 20th Century</p> <p>Chair: Zhenxin Chen</p>	<p>Confucianizing Bergson: He Lin's Concept of 'Supra-spacetime' in Global Entanglement and Knowledge Genealogy Haifeng Weng (University of Göttingen)</p>

				<p>Why did liberalism fail? The state building of modern China through the eyes of liberal intellectuals Zhenxin Chen (Freie Universität Berlin)</p> <p>A Voice from the Periphery: Liu Xianxin, a Confucian-Daoist Scholar from Sichuan and His Response to Modernity Felix Erdt (Academia Sinica)</p>
13:45-15:15 Session I	SBB 2.03	I0907 [O]	<p>Governance, Inspection Tour, and Nationalist Sentiments</p> <p>Chair: Chang Xu</p>	<p>Mazu Temple, Ritual and Community: The Role of Cultural Heritage in Village Governance on Meizhou Island Yuxin Fu (University of Oxford)</p> <p>The Pavilions among the Tents: Imperial Camps on the Nomadic Emperor's Inspection Tours in Ancient China Xinbo Wang (Nankai University)</p> <p>Research on Nationalist Sentiments Towards China Based on Big Data of News Texts (1980-2022) Wenting Xu (Shanghai International Studies University)</p>
13:45-15:15 Session I	SBB 2.04	I0908	<p>Travel, Transformation and Regional Divide</p> <p>Chair: Hongwei Bao</p>	<p>Capital Transformation Among Chinese Returnees: A Comprehensive Review Wanlu Chi (Loughborough University)</p> <p>Migrant Capitals and Ethnicity: How Class affects the Ethnic Identity of Chinese Immigrants in the UK Zhaowei Yin (University of Glasgow)</p> <p>Children's Experiences of Travel and Im/mobility in Shanghai's Summer Holidays Rachel Murphy ((University of Oxford) and Leiping Bao (Shanghai Academy of Social Science)</p> <p>Digital Feminist Activism in China: Navigating Individual-Collective Dynamic Across Urban and Rural Divides Lily (Jinxian) Wu (Shenzhen University)</p>
13:45-15:15 Session I	SBB 2.05	I0909	<p>Literary and Literature: Burden, Sensibility, Aesthetics</p>	<p>Transformations of the World and Literary Sensibility: A Comparative Study of Zhao Mengfu's and Sa Dula's Ci Poetry Tien-chun Lee (National Chengchi University)</p> <p>The Literary Aesthetics of the Zhuangzi: Lin Xiyi's Commentary and its Significance</p>

			Chair: Yan Ying	Peter Smith (University of Oxford) Loss and preservation: Childhood Trauma in Eileen Chang's Autobiographical Writing (The Fall of the Pagoda and The Book of Change) Braci (Yunqiao) Liu (University of Heidelberg)
15:15-15:30	SBB Foyer	Break		
15:30 -17:00 Session J	SBB 1.01	J1003	Beyond Bitterness: Strategies for Reclaiming the Present in Contemporary China, Part II: Embodied and Critical Dispositions Chair: Theo Stapleton Discussant: Maria Nolan	<u>Group C</u> From Wolves to Dogs: Rethinking Endurance, Sacrifice and Hard Work as Working Culture Boyang Liang (University of Leeds) Tangping as Doing: Zero-Waste Living in Urban China Anna Lora-Wainwright (University of Oxford), Tom Johnson (University of Sheffield) and Katherine Wong (University of Oxford) Politics of Refusal: Migration as relinquishment in China's rustbelt Siyu Tang (University of Oxford)
15:30 -17:00 Session J	SBB 1.02	J1004	Cooperation and Competition: China, US and Russia Chair: Natascha Gentz	Navigating Industrial Policy as a Tool against Securitisation: Making Sense of China's Security Framework Supporting Manufacturing Sector since 2018 Haoyan Yuan (Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen) Middle Powers' Omnidirectional Hedging in Sino-US Strategic Competition: Taiwan as a Case Study Zichen Shao (Queen's University Belfast) When Artemis Meets Chang'e: U.S.-China Great-power Competition over the Moon and the Cislunar Space Jan Železný (CEVRO University) China-Russia relations in the 1990s: Endless Rapprochement Hanjing Wang (University of Nottingham)
15:30 -17:00 Session J	SBB 1.03	J1005	China: United Front, Empire and Cultural Diplomacy Chair: Lin Feng	Was China an Empire? Contemporary Responses and Implications Fei Zheng (Shanghai University of Political Science and Law) Decoding China through QR Codes: What Digital Payments Reveal about Chinese Society, Culture and Values Srinivas Yanamandra (Indian School of Business)

				<p>Projecting China's Idea of China: An Analysis of International Co-production Documentaries as a Vehicle for Cultural Diplomacy, 1980 – present Chen Yang (Cardiff University)</p> <p>Research on the Failure of the United Front, before and after 1949 Boyang Zhang (National University of Singapore)</p>
15:30 -17:00 Session J	SBB 2.03	J1007 [O]	<p>Propaganda, Resistance, Elites and Food</p> <p>Chair: Yan Ying</p>	<p>Gender Discourse and Everyday Politics in Socialist China: A Content Analysis of Political Propaganda Posters in the Early PRC (1949-1978) Shiyu Wei (City University of Hong Kong)</p> <p>Writing on its 4th Anniversary: Memory, Recovery and Resistance in the Aftermath of the 7.20 Zhengzhou Flood Yichi Liu (Seoul National University)</p> <p>On the 'Culinary Nanyang' in Li Zishu's Novel Flowing Mundane Land Junjie Qin (Beijing Normal University)</p> <p>Zhou or Milk? Tradition, Science and the Shifting Ethics of Chinese Breakfast Ziyang Lin (University of Exeter)</p>
15:30 -17:00 Session J	SBB 2.04	J1008	<p>Resistance in the Digital World and Art</p> <p>Chair: Licheng Qian</p>	<p>Challenging the Fantasy of Marital Happiness: Self-Marriage and Dating Theatre in Contemporary Chinese Women's Performance Art Minji Du (University of Birmingham)</p> <p>Cute: A Jingju Aesthetic Category William Want (Shanghai Theatre Academy)</p> <p>Marxism Haunting Marxism: Tangpingism as a Comparative Praxis of Digital Resistance in China Cheng Ma (Freie Universität Berlin)</p>
15:30 -17:00 Session J	SBB 2.08	J1010	<p>Victimhood, Burden and National Memory</p> <p>Chair: Chris Berry</p>	<p>Beyond Victimhood: Representations of Resistance and Agency in the Cultural Memory of Comfort Women in Chinese-Language Films Hanqi Yang (Loughborough University)</p> <p>Literature Committed: The Burden of Literary Obligation Xin Qu (University of Oxford)</p>

				<p>The Rise of Petition Social Work in China: A Governmentality Perspective Dayuan Chen (SOAS University of London)</p> <p>National Form and the Shaping of 'Guohua': Centred on Pang Hiun-Kin's 'Miao People' Series in Two National Art Exhibitions in the 1940s Weimeng Zhou (China Central Academy of Fine Arts)</p>
17:00-17:30	SBB Foyer	Closing reception		

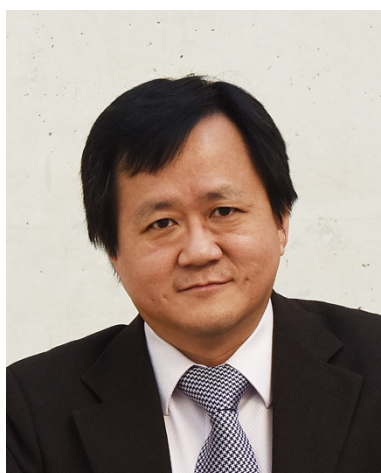
Keynote sessions

The Future of Sino-British Relations

A discussion between Professor Kerry Brown (King's College London) and Professor Steve Tsang (SOAS, University of London)

Chaired by Ms Cindy Yu (*The Times*)

Kerry Brown is Professor of Chinese Studies and Director of the Lau China Institute at King's College, London. He is an adjunct of the Australia New Zealand School of Government in Melbourne, and the co-editor of the Journal of Current Chinese Affairs, run from the German Institute for Global Affairs in Hamburg. He is President of the Kent Archaeological Society and an Affiliate of the Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit at Cambridge University. From 2012 to 2015 he was Professor of Chinese Politics and Director of the China Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, Australia. Prior to this he worked at Chatham House from 2006 to 2012, as Senior Fellow and then Head of the Asia Programme. From 1998 to 2005 he worked at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as First Secretary at the British Embassy in Beijing, and then as Head of the Indonesia, Philippine and East Timor Section. He lived in the Inner Mongolia region of China from 1994 to 1996. He has a Master of Arts from Cambridge University, a Post Graduate Diploma in Mandarin Chinese (Distinction) from Thames Valley University, London, and a PhD in Chinese politics and language from Leeds University. Professor Brown directed the Europe China Research and Advice Network (ECRAN) giving policy advice to the European External Action Service between 2011 and 2014. He is the author of almost 20 books on modern Chinese politics, and has written for every major international news outlet, and been interviewed by every major news channel on issues relating to contemporary China.



Steve Tsang is Professor of China Studies and Director of the China Institute, SOAS, London. He is also a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and an Emeritus Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford. He previously served as the Head of the School of Contemporary Chinese Studies and as Director of the China Policy Institute at the University of Nottingham. Before that he spent 29 years at Oxford University, where he earned his D.Phil. and worked as a Professorial Fellow, Dean, and Director of the Asian Studies Centre at St Antony's College. He has a broad area of research interest and has published extensively, including five single authored and fourteen collaborative books. His latest (with Olivia Cheung) is *The Political Thought of Xi Jinping* (Oxford University Press, 2024). He is currently completing a new book, 'China's Global Strategy under Xi Jinping', which will be published by OUP in 2026.

Cindy Yu is a columnist and contributing editor at The Times and Sunday Times. She was formerly Assistant Editor (Broadcast) at The Spectator, a British current affairs and arts magazine, where she also hosted the magazine's Chinese Whispers podcast. The podcast was a deep dive into all the intriguing themes of Chinese politics, society and history that often go under the radar of mainstream China reporting. She was born in Nanjing, China. She read politics, philosophy, and economics at the University of Oxford, where she also read for a master of science in contemporary Chinese studies. She has written extensively about China for The Spectator, the Telegraph, Foreign Policy, among others. She is a frequent commentator on China issues for the BBC, TalkTV, RTE News, Channel 4 and GB News.



Testing the Canon: Digital Scholarship and Early Cinema in Hong Kong

A presentation by Professor Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh (Lingnan University, Hong Kong)

Chaired by Professor Chris Berry

Abstract: How do we investigate the reception of existing film canons a century ago? For instance, which of the most prestigious silent films were shown in Hong Kong? How were these films exhibited and received locally? What role does digital scholarship play in such an investigation? Noting the inclusion and exclusion of films that were once popular (or not) into our current film canons, a list of 'classic' silent titles from Europe, America, and China was made to test the canon in the Hong Kong context. The list was subsequently checked by the aggregated data from the two digital archives on early Hong Kong film exhibition. The findings show that early films screened in Hong Kong did not match, to a large extent, the canonical history of either global or Chinese cinemas. The gap might be related to stars, the track records of directors and studios, the colonial distribution circuits, and choices of the exhibitors. In closing, I will consider other likely gaps in digital archives and the limitations of digital historiography.



Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh is Lam Wong Yiu Wah Chair Professor of Visual Studies at Lingnan University, Hong Kong. Yeh is a scholar of Chinese and Asian cinema studies, with a focus on film theory, film history, and media industries. She has published 11 books and over 70 academic articles. Her work examines the aesthetic, institutional, and economic dimensions of cinema, film culture, and media industry. In the past decade, she focused on producing new materials for the study of early cinema and has published two online databases, several articles, and three edited volumes: *Early Film Culture in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Republican China* (University of Michigan Press, 2018); *Beyond Shanghai: New Perspectives on Early Chinese Cinema* (Beijing UP, 2016); and *Rethinking Chinese Film Industry: New Methods, New Histories* (Beijing UP, 2010). Her most recent works are *32 New Takes on Taiwan Cinema* (University of Michigan Press, 2022, with Darrell Davis and Wenchi Lin) and *The Colonial Screen: Early Cinema in Hong Kong* (Oxford University Press, 2025).

Screenings

The conference has screenings of two documentaries. They are scheduled alongside the parallel panels. Both films are screened at Attenborough Film Theatre at the main campus, which is about a 10-minute walk from the conference's main venue Sir Bob Burgess building. The filmmakers will join the post-screening discussion with the audience.

Made in Ethiopia: Up Close and Personal with Chinese Investment in Africa (Xinyan Yu and Max Duncan, 2024, 91 minutes)

When a massive Chinese industrial park lands in rural Ethiopia, a dusty farming town finds itself at the new frontier of globalisation. The sprawling factory complex's formidable Chinese director Motto now needs every bit of mettle and charm she can muster to push through a high-stakes expansion that promises 30,000 new jobs. Ethiopian farmer Workinesh and factory worker Beti have staked their futures on the prosperity the park promises. But as initial hope meets painful realities, they find themselves, like their country, at a pivotal crossroads. Filmed over four years with singular access, *Made in Ethiopia* is a feature-length documentary that lifts the curtain on China's historic but misunderstood impact on Africa, and explores contemporary Ethiopia at a moment of profound crisis. Its nuance, complexity and multi-perspective approach go beyond black-and-white narratives of victims and villains. As the three women's stories unfold, *made in Ethiopia* challenges audiences to rethink the relationship between tradition and modernity, growth and welfare, the development of a country and the well-being of its people. Since its World Premiere at Tribeca Festival in June 2024, the film has travelled to over 30 film festivals, engaging broad and diverse audiences. It has struck a chord with academics, particularly in China, Africa and Development Studies, who see their research brought to life and made accessible, without sacrificing the integrity and balance essential to both good academia and journalism. We propose a screening at BACS, presented by co-director Max Duncan, with a Q+A and potentially a panel of three additional academics familiar with subject matter (subject to interest and availability) to discuss the wider implications of the scenarios seen in the film, as well as the symbiotic relationship and synergies between academic and documentary practices.



Max Duncan (Co-director / Co-producer / Director of Photography) is an award-winning independent filmmaker, cinematographer and journalist whose work has appeared on platforms including the *BBC*, *PBS*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times* and *Al Jazeera*. He worked for a decade in China, first as a video journalist for Reuters news agency in Beijing and then independently, exploring the country's profound transformation from many angles. He has since reported widely across Asia (including several times in North Korea), Africa, Europe and Latin America. He has a special interest in global development and the human impact of economic and social transition. Max has won a World Press Photo Award, been supported by organisations including Pulitzer, and is an alumnus of Yaddo and Logan Nonfiction programs. He also lectures on filmmaking and journalism. *Made in Ethiopia* is his feature documentary debut.

Taiwan Undaunted: In Search of the Nation that Cannot Call Itself a Nation (Neal E. Robbins, 2024, 105 minutes)



Taiwan Undaunted is a four-part 105-minute series that explores the multifaceted aspects of Taiwanese identity and the nation's ongoing struggle for recognition from multiple perspectives. The film, winner of awards at the Accolade Film Festival and Singapore Seabreeze Festival, is currently available on Taiwan Plus and YouTube.

Neal E Robbins is a freelance journalist, former foreign correspondent in Asia and Europe, and former Professor of journalism in the US and Taiwan. He completed a Taiwan Studies Master's Degree at SOAS. He also narrates the film, drawing years of his experience he spent in Taiwan between 1970 and 2024.

Abstracts

A0100 Chinese Cities: A Twentieth-Century Experiment in Continuity [P]

The development of Chinese cities was one of the most ambitious revolutions and social experiments throughout the 20th century. Before 1949, during the global wave of colonialism, the Kuomintang and its affiliated intellectuals as well as foreign and local developers undertook extensive urban construction, drawing on Western social systems and technologies. From 1949 to 1976, as part of the communist bloc and at the forefront of the Cold War, China adopted a planned economic system to consolidate skilled labour nationwide, aiming to build so-called "socialist cities". After 1976, with the advent of reform and opening-up policies, China began to steer urban development through a combination of market mechanisms and state policies. This panel examines four case studies, focusing on the builders and users of Chinese cities, to analyse the impact of these social experiments on urban development. The first case, CHEN's study, centres on Chen Qingcai, a contractor born before the fall of the Qing dynasty, who pioneered the use of reinforced concrete in building construction in both urban and rural areas during the 1920s and 1930s. The second case, LINCOLN's study, spans both sides of the 1949 threshold and investigates academic organizations in municipal planning, which were influenced by both Western and Soviet models. The third case, ZHANG's study, explores the role of city builders in the planned economy era after 1949, examining how socialist economic and propaganda systems trained and managed bricklayers to construct socialist cities. The final case, LI's study, covers the period of reform and opening-up, analysing the distribution of urban housing during the transition from a planned to a market economy. Through these cases, this panel seeks to elucidate the connections between urban development and social change in 20th-century China, situating Chinese cities within the broader context of global transformations and its international connections.

The World of Chen Qingcai: A Contractor and Real Estate Developer in Rural and Urban East China, 1914-1931

Yichuan Chen, University College London

Only quite recently did researchers, especially architectural historians, notice the extensive urban-rural flow of building designs and construction techniques in the early 20th century East China, but to date there is little in-depth research on such a process of dissemination of modern technologies, materials and designs. A building contractor and real estate developer in Shanghai, Chen Qingcai (1876?-1958), provides an excellent case study as he has left a large assembly of different buildings and structures not only around his hometown in Ningbo, but also in Buddhist and Taoist sacred sites

including Putuo and Maoshan mountains in Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces. All of these buildings and structures, including houses, bridges, pavilions and paifang (memorial arches) were built in the 1920s and 1930s with reinforced concrete, and funded by Chen Qingcai himself. Through extensive search in newspaper archives, this research reconstructed the career of Chen Qingcai as both a building contractor and a real estate developer in Shanghai focusing on lower-class residential development. Furthermore, fieldworks to many buildings and structures built by Chen Qingcai in rural Zhejiang revealed his strong belief in vernacular religions popular among the lower-class in Chinese society, and further archival research revealed the typical negotiation process that led to the construction of these structures. Overall, the research reveals how the wealth and modern design and construction knowledge brought by real estate development, combined with strong religious and cultural belief, led to the widespread construction of modern reinforced concrete buildings and structures in rural East China in the 1920s and 1930s.

Laying Bricks in Communist China: A Study on Brickwork Crafts and Labour Systems in China, 1949-1966

Tian Zhang, Tongji University

After 1949, communist China recovered from the war and was in dire need of a large number of skilled workers for construction. The government inherited the capitalized construction companies, which had been well developed during the Republican of China period, and transformed them into socialist organizations, breaking up and reorganizing the skilled workers into a new workforce. On this basis, a system of labour training led by the socialistic planned economy was established. This system took the national construction plan as its starting point, and included subsystems such as vocational training, civil engineering textbook, model worker propaganda, even film making, so that workers could learn new technologies while working and become part of the “socialist apprenticeship”. This study examines how the bricklaying work, a very fundamental labour for building, was affected by this social system between 1949 and 1976. The study starts with bricklaying textbooks, tracing the sources of brick layering knowledge, and on this basis analyses the ways in which this knowledge was passed on to craftsmen. Based on a series of bricklayers' training manuals, model workers' propaganda materials, and Chinese and Soviet bricklayers' textbooks, the study explores how bricklaying became a nationalized activity during this period, and how the socialist system's arrangements acted on the workers, who were the most microcosmic individuals of social construction.

The Development and Lived Experience of Workers' Houses in Late 20th Century China

Yifan Li, Queen Mary University of London

This research explores the impact of worker's housing on urban development and living experiences in China, focusing on Sunan (southern Jiangsu Province) during the 1950s to 1990s, a period marked by rapid industrialization and urbanization. The study addresses the intertwined role of the danwei system, which allocated housing through state-owned enterprises, in shaping urban morphology and everyday life. By combining archival research with interviews, it investigates how workers' housing influenced not only the urban fabric but also the personal and familial experiences of the residents. The dissertation particularly highlights the influence of housing allocation policies, such as the point system, on family dynamics, social mobility, and community formation within micro-districts. These residential areas, often self-contained with social facilities, were integral to the socialist urban model, fostering a distinct social structure and home culture. The research also examines the long-lasting legacies of these worker's houses in the context of China's post-1998 housing reform, which privatized many of these residences, transforming the housing market and altering the lived experiences of former residents, as well as the development of the community and the urban texture. This dissertation contributes to a deeper understanding of the social and architectural transformations that occurred in Chinese urban environments before and after the housing reform,

offering insights into the relationship between housing, social welfare, and urban development during this period.

A0101 Constructing and Conceptualising Modern He'nan [P]

Henan Province serves as a microcosm for revealing the interplay of spatial, political, and cultural transformations in modern China. Examining the formations of spaces across Henan's modern history, this panel explores how shifts in political, ritual, communal, and commercial spaces reflect broader social dynamics, state-society relations, and the resilience of local identities. This panel spans across temporal and thematic spectrums: from socialist urbanisation to neoliberal consumerism, from ritualized nationalism to communal religiosity. It hopes to explore Henan's role as a contested space where state initiatives, market forces, and local identities converge in modern history. The first paper delves into the 1954 relocation of Henan's provincial capital from Kaifeng to Zhengzhou, a symbolic shift of power centre. Looking at both the mobilising effort in finishing the relocation and its lasting effect on spatial hierarchies, this paper studies the lasting intra-provincial spatial inequality between Zhengzhou and Kaifeng. The second paper analyses the (re)construction of the Yellow Emperor's Hometown Scenic Area in Xinzheng, illustrating how architecture and ritual spaces are engineered to embody nationalist narratives. Adapting to evolving political expectations, this site exemplifies the spatialization of a 'spiritual homeland,' merging historical symbolism with contemporary governance to reinforce ideological cohesion. The third paper explores a temple fair in Puyang. This paper reveals how the everyday religious practices in this annual event blends communal gathering and polytheistic worship amid environmental and bureaucratic challenges. The fourth paper investigates Pangdonglai, a shopping mall which turned into a national phenomenon. Using auto-biographical methods, this paper shows how its popularity reflects shifting civic sentiments in post-industrial China, while its disputes with local government reveal tensions in the state-business relationship. By employing an interdisciplinary perspective with diverse methodologies, this panel discusses how spaces are made and remade in China's historical and ongoing transformation.

How to move a capital: Kaifeng, Zhengzhou, and socialist centrality in the fifties

Mark Baker, University of Manchester

I admit that the moving of a provincial capital does not set the pulse racing. The relocations of provincial governments in China's twentieth century have received only cursory historical attention, despite multiple instances of the phenomenon (a remarkable eight changes in the case of Hebei). In the extraordinary history of war, famine and resilience in Henan Province, the shifting of the capital from Kaifeng to Zhengzhou in October 1954 might feel like a bureaucratic footnote. There are two reasons why it is worth exploring. First, the process of moving a provincial government is fascinating in itself. The debates, delays, and eventual haste of the relocation shed light not only on the limitations and clumsiness of the early socialist state but also its ability to mobilize human labour power to get a job done. The experience of this mass migration of tens of thousands of people is also an intriguing example of how emerging bureaucratic groups, like so many of China's workers, had to adapt in the 1950s to a new life elsewhere. Second, the move of Henan's government helps us think about the meanings of political centrality in modern China. By exploring the condemnation of 'feudal' Kaifeng and promotion of 'socialist' Zhengzhou, this presentation shows how the relocation was part of a wider reimagining of political power in the 1950s – but how it also reproduced an older dynamic of territorial-administrative hierarchy that, under a planned economy, had even more serious distributional consequences than before. For residents of Kaifeng, left to languish under both the socialist and post-Mao market systems, the move of the capital was not a bureaucratic curiosity but a deep scar.

(Re)constructing the Hometown of the Yellow Emperor in Henan (1980-)

Mengyuan Tian, University of Cambridge

This paper examines how spatial construction contributes to contemporary interpretations of the Yellow Emperor, an integral aspect of the spatialization of the spiritual home of the Chinese nation in modern China. Since the 1980s, the (re)construction of related sites has been driven by initiatives from local officials and entrepreneurs, government investments, and contributions from architectural designers. Given the site's political, cultural, and economic significance, the (re)construction has undergone four distinct stages over the past three decades to adapt to evolving political and social expectations. Focusing on the latest renovation of the Yellow Emperor's Hometown Scenic Area in 2020 in Xinzheng City, Henan Province, this chapter analyses how architectural design facilitates the creation of spaces for national rituals and how expectations for such rituals shape architectural presentations. The study highlights multiple spatial layers contributing to the site's construction, including the architecturally symmetrical landscape within the scenic area, featuring key structures such as the Root-Seeking Gate, Ancestral Hall, Worship Square, Xuanyuan Palace, and the statue of the Yellow Emperor. The (re)construction process reflects the development of infrastructure under local and central governance while demonstrating shifting demands for spatializing the spiritual home of the Chinese nation in contemporary China.

Entertainment before the wheat harvest: A temple fair for Buddha's Birthday among a small area Yangyang Lan, École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE)

Every year, from the 7th to the 10th of the fourth month of the Lunar calendar, a four-day temple fair takes place in several villages in Pu Yang (濮陽), Henan Province. This fair commemorates Sakyamuni's birthday, known as Fo Dan Jie (佛誕節). The villages are situated in the Yellow River flood zone, an area that is prone to flooding, and as a result, they are included in the local government's relocation plan. Despite the absence of a significant Buddhist community in this region, the fair has been celebrated for decades, centred around a small Buddhist temple in the eastern part of one village that worships Puguang Buddha (照普光佛). Although one village has been relocated to the north of the Yellow River dyke as planned, the remaining villages have continued to hold the fair in recent years. The fair serves multiple purposes. First, taking place before the wheat ripening stage, it provides an opportunity for people to acquire farm tools in preparation for the harvest. Second, entertainment is a key aspect, with local opera performances held from day to night over the four days, drawing many attendees, particularly the elderly. Lastly, worship plays an important role, showcasing typical polytheistic traits. I immersed myself in the fair's activities to uncover how locals celebrate this occasion in their own unique way. Moreover, I intend to delve into the history and current state of Buddhist beliefs in this predominantly non-Buddhist region, as well as explore the everyday religious life within this community.

Constructing Pangdonglai: Vernacular Ideology and Fandom Economics in Xinxiang Yuehanjiang (Azure) Bao, University College London

Xinxiang, an industrial city of 6 million population located north of Henan's provincial capital Zhengzhou, enjoyed an unexpected popularity in the first quarter of 2024. The city's flagship shopping mall, Pangdonglai (胖东来, Donglai, the Fat), went viral on the social media nationwide. Attracting tourists from neighbouring counties and provinces, the grim economic outlook of the city seems to be casted by a post-industrial, consumerist boom driven by the mall's charismatic leader Yu Donglai (于东来). Starting as Yu's local street shop in Xuchang, Pangdonglai came to Xinxiang in 2005. Its high service standards and guarantee on quality of goods led to an immediate success in the city at the start of the century, and became phenomenal on the national mediascape as the economy slows. This paper will use auto-ethnographical methods to explore how the space of Pangdonglai in Xinxiang was constructed from the dynamics between vernacular ideology and political economy. I will explain how Pangdonglai's philosophy of limited expansion of business and staff welfare stood alien in the heyday of Chinese capitalism in the 2010s yet found its surprising resonance and popularity with the present civic sentiments. The estate problem faced by Pangdonglai in Xinxiang in 2014 and its eventual settlement provides an example of the state-

business relationship. The imprisonment of the then vice-mayor of Xinxiang who was in charge of this negotiation provides further clues in understanding the process of constructing space in modern Henan.

A0102 Crossing Borders with Ink: Textual Compilation, Cultural Concepts, and Foreign Relations in the Qing Empire's Frontier Regions [P]

Qing China, as a multi-ethnic and trans-regional early-modern empire, dominated vast territories and maintained external relations not solely through military power but also through the production of texts, cultural negotiation, and institutional flexibility. They built dynamic influential networks across its borders and neighbouring regions. This panel uses cross-regional texts (e.g., genealogies, dictionaries, envoy records, treaties) to reveal imperial governance in its frontier regions and external relations. Language and text became vehicles for the 'civilising' narrative of the empire. The government used them to integrate border communities and to consolidate the dynastic order. The interlingual compilation of texts and the reinterpretation of legal discourses reveal that the Qing Empire exercised its authority at the periphery of its borders. This process of "using ink to expand the frontier" not only reflects the Qing Empire's role as a colonial and inclusive entity but also highlights the symbiotic relationship between cultural translation and political dynamics in the pre-modern international order of East Asia. "Colonial" refers to the ideas that justified the superiority of the cosmopolitan and explained the differences among the subjects in the Qing Empire and the administrative institutions, laws, and policies that manifested those ideas. It also describes imperial governance regardless of whether its subjects view their submission as legitimate or fair. By analysing the texts' materiality, mobility, and power implications, the papers reposition the Qing Empire as occupying a unique position in early globalisation—not only as an inheritor of the traditional Chinese order but also as an experimental ground for trans-regional intellectual and institutional innovation.

Qing Empire, Native Chieftain Mu Family and the Nakhi People in Yunnan Frontier: Resistance, Agency, Civilizing Project and Imperial Eyes of Colonial Lijiang

Ting Cheung Wong, Binghamton University

The Mu family (木氏土司) was a powerful Nakhi (納西) native chieftain rooted in Lijiang, a city in Yunnan Province for more than four centuries. The Qing Empire is well-known for its conquest marching west. However, this paper calls attention to its marching to the Nakhi people in Lijiang during and after the Yongzheng's reign. Since the late Kangxi's reign, the Mongols in Tibet continuously threatened the Qing's western frontier. For the sake of securing the crucial transportation artery connecting Yunnan province and Tibet, the Qing court decided to abolish the hereditary power of the Mu family. It made them affiliated with the Administrator directly appointed by the court. Therefore, a straightforward interpretation of the event as another general case of "Gaitu Guiliu" (改土歸流) ignores the complicated geopolitical background of the abolishment decision. In addition, the civilising project was very much promoted and strengthened after the abolishment of the Mu family. However, a long durée observation shows a different acculturation and assimilation process between the native aristocratic Mu family and the Nakhi commoners. The diversified Chinese written and painting materials, including the *Genealogy of Mu Family* (木氏宗譜), Veritable Records, Palace Memorials, Local Gazetteers and the *Qing Imperial Illustrations of Tributary Peoples* (皇清職貢圖), presented the legitimisation constructed by the Mu aristocrats and multiple contradiction images from the imperial eyes. The consequence of the civilising project in Lijiang was significantly different compared to other frontier regions. Meanwhile, the conflicted imperial projections and local visions coexist in the vast empire. The case study of the Nakhi people living on the southwest frontier further demonstrates the kaleidoscopic colonial nature of the Qing Empire.

Gaps in Translation: An Examination of the Compilation of Manchu-Chinese-Korean Multilingual Dictionaries in Chosŏn

Kuan Chieh Chen, National Taiwan University

In 18TH century Northeast Asia, the Qing Empire and the Chosŏn maintained close interactions, including extensive exchanges of texts. Against the backdrop of intensified diplomatic relations and the practical need to learn Manchu following the Ming-Qing transition, the Chosŏn Bureau of Interpreters restructured its Jurchen studies into Manchu studies, establishing a quadripartite system of language education—Manchu, Chinese, Mongolian, and Japanese—to train translators and foreign language specialists. This institutional shift facilitated linguistic interactions and spurred the production of language-learning textbooks and multilingual dictionaries. Notably, these dictionaries were not compiled through direct translation. Instead, Chosŏn lexicographers made deliberate adjustments to the ordering and interpretation of entries, reflecting a degree of editorial autonomy. Departing from prior scholarship that primarily treated these Chosŏn-authored dictionaries as phonetic corpora for reconstructing historical Korean or Manchu pronunciations, this study adopts perspectives from textual circulation, compilation practices, and cultural translation.

Focusing on Dong Mun Yu Hae (同文類解) and Mirror of the Chinese and Manchu Language (漢清文鑑). This paper examines how Chosŏn scholars and interpreters adapted the Mirror of the Manchu language (Qian-Long) as a foundational text. It highlights their editorial interventions, such as reordering Manchu lexical entries, omitting terms, or reinterpreting definitions. These modifications, the paper argues, reveal Chosŏn's self-positioning as a "Little China" (小中華) within the broader Sinocentric order, reflecting ideological negotiations in the dictionary. By analysing the compilation of multilingual dictionaries, this study addresses the scholarly imbalance in Qing-Chosŏn relations, which has long prioritised Chinese-language sources over Manchu materials. It further aims to unravel the complex geopolitical shifts in 18TH century East Asia through seemingly minor translational discrepancies. In doing so, the paper interrogates Chosŏn's agency as a mediator in interpreting the Ming-Qing transition's impact on East Asia, exploring how its state-sponsored lexicography articulated Chosŏn's identity and perceived role within the regional order.

An Extraordinary Act beyond Convention: Kui Xu's Mission to Joseon under the Kangxi Reign **Pin Hsin Huang, National Taiwan University**

This study investigates the diplomatic mission of Kui Xu (揆敘), a prominent Qing official and son of Mingzhu (明珠), to the Joseon Kingdom during the Kangxi Emperor's reign. Appointed as Chief Academic Officer (Xuezhang) of the Hanlin Academy at the age of twenty-nine, Kui Xu's envoy journey was not only a personal attempt to consolidate familial prestige but also a deliberate manifestation of Qing imperial authority through cultural and ritualistic means. His interactions in Joseon—such as soliciting poetry from high-ranking Korean officials and bestowing imperial calligraphy—provoked considerable discussion within the Korean court and literati, even prompting the formulation of official guidelines for receiving Qing envoys. Nonetheless, Kui Xu's own travel writings and poetry conspicuously omit these assertive displays, focusing instead on natural landscapes and expressions of imperial benevolence. This selective representation underscores the dual purpose of envoy literature as both personal literary endeavor and a medium reinforcing imperial legitimacy. Utilizing a range of primary sources—including Qing archival documents, Joseon chronicles, and Kui Xu's collected works—this paper contextualizes the mission within the complex dynamics of Qing-Joseon relations, revealing how individual agency and imperial policy intersected in frontier diplomacy. Moreover, the lasting legacy of Kui Xu's mission is reflected in its continued resonance within Korean elite discourse decades later and its influence on cultural compilations such as the Anthology of Women's Poetry through the Dynasties. Ultimately, Kui Xu's mission exemplifies the intricate interplay among power, ritual performance, and cultural capital in the early Qing dynasty's management of its tributary relationships.

Extraterritoriality, First Unequal Treaty and Nation-State Building

Chao Lang, Harvard University

The 1832 Qing-Khoqand peace agreement bears notable similarities to the Treaty of Nanking, particularly in the privileges it granted to Khoqandis in Southern Xinjiang. The most significant of these privileges was the right of the Khoqand ruler to appoint delegates to Xinjiang responsible for overseeing Khoqandi merchants and collecting commercial taxes. This provision effectively excluded the Qing government from collecting taxes from these merchants in its own territory. This study addresses the scholarly debate surrounding whether the Qing-Khoqand agreement was the first unequal treaty of Qing, particularly in terms of granting extraterritorial rights. Critics of this view argue that the agreement merely exemplifies the Qing court's flexible application of personal jurisdiction. Unlike the Treaty of Nanking, the Qing-Khoqand agreement was established following a successful Qing military campaign. This paper investigates the Qing court's policies towards Khoqandi merchants in Altishahr from the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, focusing on instances of requested tax exemptions by the Khoqand ruler and legal issues involving Khoqandi merchants. It contrasts the Qing court's narrative with scholarly interpretations of the agreement in the early twentieth century, during which period China transitioned from an empire to a nation-state. By analysing under-explored Manchu documents from Xinjiang, this paper seeks to uncover the Qing court's approach to personal jurisdiction and extraterritoriality in frontier regions when dealing with a non-Western power prior to the mid-nineteenth century. It reveals the Qing Empire's distinctive approach to managing frontier and cross-border issues, highlighting its divergence from the mechanisms of a nation-state.

A0103 Reinvigorating Leninism for the 21st Century: Party Governance in Xi Jinping's Third Term [P]

Under Xi Jinping, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has embarked on an ambitious project to reinforce Leninist governance structures while adapting them to the challenges of the 21st century. This panel examines how party governance—shaped by ideological imperatives, historical narratives, and strategic recalibrations—has influenced both domestic and foreign policy under Xi's leadership. By investigating the contradictory signals in China's external relations, the evolving role of historical and cultural governance, the moral re-engineering of Party cadres, and the institutional innovation of social work departments, the papers in this panel collectively offer new insights into the mechanisms, contradictions, and outcomes of contemporary CCP governance. This panel addresses key questions: How does party governance shape China's domestic and foreign policy contradictions? What role do ideology and history play in sustaining CCP rule? How have efforts to instill Party discipline affected governance effectiveness? What does the emergence of new institutions like the Central Society Work Department reveal about the evolving relationship between the Party and society? The first paper explores contradictions in Xi's foreign policy, arguing that tensions between united front tactics and Xi Jinping Thought's hardline nationalism have resulted in conflicting signals. The second paper examines shifts in the CCP's strategies to counter historical and cultural nihilism, highlighting a more sophisticated and technology-driven ideological governance approach. The third paper analyses how Xi's moral re-engineering of Party cadres has led to formalism and bureaucratic inertia, ultimately undermining governance effectiveness. Finally, the fourth paper discusses the Central Society Work Department as a fundamental shift in the Party's approach to social governance, moving from indirect influence to direct organizational control. In exploring these questions, the panel also reflects critically on the usefulness of various approaches, paradigms, frameworks, analytical techniques, and data sources for studying Chinese politics in the Xi period. This discussion will contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underpinning contemporary Chinese governance and its implications for domestic and international politics.

**Party Governance as a Method for China's Foreign Policy
Olivia Cheung, King's College London**

China's intentions and strategic objectives are a matter of intense debate. Many critics accuse Xi of hypocrisy. For example, notwithstanding an expressed desire to mend ties with Europe, Xi has defended Putin's war against Ukraine, which has plunged Europe into its worst security crisis since the end of the Second World War. Xi's approach toward Taiwan is widely seen as another example of hypocrisy. Xi insisted that he is committed to "peaceful reunification." Yet, under Xi, the People's Liberation Army has used unprecedented military intimidation against Taiwan. This has predictably hardened Taiwan's resolve and invited pushback from the United States and its allies. The odds for forceful unification are never higher. Why does Xi say one thing but do another? This article addresses this puzzle by using the concept of "party governance," or the mode of operation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), as the method of analysis. It argues that Xi's and China's foreign policy apparatus are products of "party governance." Xi has inherited the long-standing model of party governance, which underscores the importance of building a "united front" with others in order to isolate the principal enemy. Xi sees himself as a champion of the "united front" and instructs his officials to do so. However, in reality, the practice of the united front in China's external relations has been undermined by Xi Jinping Thought, the new ideological guide for party governance under Xi. Xi Thought nurtures anti-western nationalism, taking an alarmist view of regime security and sovereignty disputes. This has led to a predisposition to a hardliner response to perceived slights of China's interests. The parallel operation of the united front and Xi Thought—opposite elements of party governance—has produced contradictory foreign policy signals.

Governing Time: Party governance at the Intersection of History and Culture

Jean Christopher Mittelstaedt, University of Zurich

In 2014, Xi Jinping asserted that Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members are neither historical nor cultural nihilists. The governance of history and culture has long been central to the CCP's authority, as evidenced by the three historical resolutions of 1945, 1981, and 2021, as well as the extensive resources allocated to cultural governance. However, beyond the broad frameworks established by these resolutions over the Party's century-long existence, how have the CCP's threat perceptions and governance strategies regarding history and culture evolved over time? This article addresses this question by examining the concepts of historical and cultural nihilism, with a particular focus on the periods of Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping. It finds that risk assessments of historical and cultural nihilism have undergone significant transformation, largely due to shifting manifestations that have become more insidious, the increasing use of new technologies, and their targeted influence on specific segments of society. Consequently, the mechanisms employed to counter these perceived threats have become more sophisticated and expansive, reflecting a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach. To substantiate this argument, the article draws upon a broad array of sources, including leaders' memoirs, biographies, and speeches, as well as policy documents, study guides, intellectual debates, legal texts, and secondary sources such as articles from the CCP Central Party School's *Study Times*, the *People's Daily's People's Tribune*, the Central Committee's flagship journal *Seeking Truth*, and *Hongqi Wengao*.

Engineering Hypocrisy in Xi's China: Is "Strict Party Governance" Creating a "Culture of Simulation"?

Patricia Thornton, University of Oxford

The Chinese Communist Party under Xi Jinping is attempting to undertake a momentous shift away from so-called "performance legitimacy" (绩效合法性), based largely upon its ability to continue to deliver high rates of growth. As early as 2014, Xi posited that the "new normal of economic development" (经济发展新常态) characterised by slower growth rates requires the Party to govern itself strictly (全面从严治党) by managing its cadres more scrupulously (从严管理干部), imposing more exacting standards of conduct (标准严格), and requiring them to deliver on performance benchmarks without expectation of material reward. This process of moral re-engineering, as Xi envisioned it, required Party organizations to "close up loopholes" (环节衔接) "connect the dots" (

措施配套), and “clarify duties’ (责任分明) for cadres at all levels the Party-state system. At the level of individual members, “strict governance of the Party” requires ceaseless attention to ideological study, the cultivation of an unwavering attention to crisis (忧患意识), and the performance of unfaltering loyalty to the Party Centre. However, in January 2020, Xi expressed his concern that what years of intensive organizational realignment and moral re-education had in fact engineered was a surfeit of Party members and cadres who were “content with the status quo, and simply muddling through” by playing the role of “good guys” (老好人) “peace officers” (太平官) and “fence-sitters” (墙头草). What followed was an all-out attack against “formalism” (形式主义) and “bureaucratism” (官僚主义) within the normative “political ecology” and “microclimate” (小气候) of the Party. As Bakken warned, the price tag of the “exemplary society” is hypocrisy—a form of “lying” that inevitably arises from a “culture of simulation” designed to “elicit formal overt obedience.” Drawing upon statistical data from the CCDI tracking the numbers of cadres investigated (查处), censured (批评), and disciplined (处分) for formalism and bureaucratism, as well as narrative descriptions of “typical cases,” I describe how the Party’s internal process of high-stakes moral engineering in Xi’s “new era” is ultimately self-defeating insofar as the replacement of material rewards with political loyalty places a premium on political performance, often at the expense of effective governance.

“If not the Party, then Who?”: Organizing Society the Party Way under the CCP Central Society Work Department

Holly Snape, University of Glasgow

In spring 2023, in a rare move, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) established a new functional department (analogous to the Organization or Propaganda Department). The Central Society Work Department (CSWD, 中央社会工作部) is charged with managing public petitioning, guiding “Party building” among gig economy workers and within NGOs and businesses, and interfacing with “self-governance” entities in communities and villages. Mirrored down to county level, the CSWD’s establishment is creating a vast network of new Party “society work” agencies around the country. With the system still in a fledgling state, little is known about its leadership models, identity and methods, all of which are newly evolving. This paper, based on an examination of the CSWD’s functions, local documentary data, and preliminary fieldwork, will examine the new system’s primary purpose: to change the Party’s relationship with, and role among, “the masses,” “(re)organizing” society and reinventing “mass line” work. It will suggest that the system’s development is creating a clear break from the Party’s past approach to social governance, attempting instead to turn the Party into society’s principal “organizer.”

A0104 Peace, Gender and Diplomacy in Twentieth Century China [P]

China’s ‘peaceful rise’ has led to unprecedented attention being paid to China’s diplomatic strategies in recent years. However, how modern Chinese diplomacy is gendered has received scant attention from scholars. Meanwhile, feminist IR historians have long paid attention to and critically examined ‘peace’ as a cornerstone of women’s international organising in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Drawing on histories of IR, gender studies, migration history, and translation studies, this panel seeks to understand how ‘peace’ has been deployed in Chinese diplomacy and how this discourse was gendered. We aim to uncover Chinese men and women’s formal and informal diplomatic roles as students, translators, interpreters, journalists, cultural intermediaries and delegates to international conferences. Our questions include: How did Chinese men and women use the rhetoric of ‘peace’ in their dealings with their international counterparts? What forms did their diplomacy take and what were the forums for exchange? How did gender, race, class and religion intersect in such settings? How did women negotiate the tensions in their position as feminist activists and representatives of China? We track gendered articulations of Chinese diplomacy across 12 countries and 3 continents from 1921-1954. Scrutinising the writings of three feminists representing China in interwar France, Coraline Jortay reveals the multiple translations which feminisms go through as they become part of transnational dialogues. Jennifer Bond and

Helena Lopes offer case studies of women who represented China's war efforts to US and European audiences in official and unofficial capacities during the Second Sino-Japanese War: Deng Yuzhi and Guo Jingqiu. Taken together the papers highlight overlooked gendered dimensions of diplomacy, and the fluidity of the meanings of 'peace' as deployed by Chinese men and women.

Labour activist and Christian diplomat: Deng Yuzhi's international thought

Jennifer Bond, University College London

This paper examines the diplomatic career and international thought of Cora Deng, or Deng Yuzhi (邓裕志) (1900-1996). Educated at Ginling College, Deng is best known for her work as a labour activist during the 1930s. A committed Christian-Socialist, she helped the CCP to contact women workers in Shanghai through the YWCA night schools and headed the Chinese YWCA after 1949. Drawing on extensive oral history interviews conducted by Emily Honig in 1985, Deng's published writings, and archival sources from China, USA, Switzerland and UK, this paper shifts our focus to Deng's international training and subsequent diplomatic career. What role did her international education, in China and abroad, play in shaping her thinking and career? How did Christianity influence her diplomacy after 1949 and how was this gendered? During the 1920-30s the YWCA sponsored Deng to study at the LSE, she later interned at the ILO, and during the Second Sino-Japanese War gained an MA from New York University. During the 1950s she became the international face of the YWCA of China and represented Chinese Christian women at international conferences across the Cold War divide. Her career offers a fascinating case study of the pathways to diplomacy that international organisations, such as the YWCA, opened to Chinese women. Analysing the mixture of Christianity, feminism, and communism in Deng's writings and memories, the paper helps to uncover the history of Chinese women's international thought and complicates neat binaries in the historiography of the international women's movement.

Feminist Entanglements in Sino-French Relations: Writing Women and Diplomatic Circles in Interwar France

Coraline Jortay, the French Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS)

How do feminist movements intersect with formal and informal diplomatic channels? And to what extent do they become transnational in the process? Zooming in on the lives of three Chinese women active in French diplomatic circles in the interwar period (Li Zezhen, Zhang Yalang and Zheng Yuxiu), this paper examines the overlaps and tensions between their feminist activism and their diplomatic roles. At a time when the defence of women's rights could be construed both as a progressive charm offensive and as a threat in male-dominated diplomatic circles, this paper explores how these women's multilingual work (including co-authorship with French feminists, translational, journalistic and academic writing) leverages multiple amical and professional circles and the ways in which their writing practices are reshaped in the process. Drawing on personal correspondence, published works and a wide array of French and Chinese archival sources, this paper sheds light onto the multiple translations that local feminisms go through as they become part of transnational dialogues, and the wider francophone and sinophone resonances of interwar Sino-French Chinese women's diplomatic circles in places as varied as Egypt, Romania, Indochina and the Dutch Indies.

'China Goes West': Guo Jingqiu and Chinese Resistance in the United States during the Global Second World War

Helena Lopes, Cardiff University

The United States was arguably the most significant foreign ally of the Republic of China in the 1940s. Alongside more renowned figures such as Song Meiling, Lin Yuntang or Wellington Koo, more neglected actors played important roles in promoting Sino-American ties in favour of Chinese resistance during the Global Second World War. One of them was Guo Jingqiu, also known as Helena Kuo (1912-1999). This Macau-born, Guangzhou-, Nanjing- and Shanghai-educated Chinese woman

had a stellar, albeit now forgotten, career as a journalist, writer, public speaker and translator 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. This paper zooms in on Guo's activities in America during the war, drawing on books, the press, personal papers, and other records both authored by Guo or written about her during her wartime stay in the US (that turned out to be the beginning of a lifelong residency in the country). I argue that Guo's wartime work represented China as an equal partner to the US and affirmed her legitimacy – as a Chinese, as a woman, and as an individual – to speak for China to the world and to be respected as an intellectual creator in her own right. This presentation is part of a global microhistory project on multilingual women, cultural diplomacy and Chinese resistance in the Second World War.

A0105 Using Hong Kong's past in history, historiography, and comedy [P]

This panel brings together scholars of Hong Kong and China from different fields to examine how different elements of Hong Kong's past has been given meaning and used by different actors. Florence Mok's paper explores how notions of tradition, especially those connected with an emotive topic such as death and funerary rites, interacted with modern notions of hygiene and economic incentive. Adonis Li's paper uses the Kowloon-Canton Railway as a case study to investigate how urban Hong Kong reached into the rural (and often read as 'traditional') New Territories, bringing its colonial forms of governance and state-society interactions along the tracks. Wayne Wong's paper examines the 'post-comedy' of Dayo Wong in contemporary Hong Kong, tracking his use of nostalgia and a particular reading of Hong Kong's past to connect with local and diasporic audiences. Finally, David Clayton's paper zooms out to explore Hong Kong's place within 'global history' on a broader scale, showing how Hong Kong's past has been used by scholars within the field and without. Together, these four papers interrogate the claims made about Hong Kong and its links to the world. Who gets to speak for, to write about, to complain about, to laugh at (or with) Hong Kong?

Accidents, Complaints, and State-society-passenger Relations on Hong Kong's Railway, c. 1950s-1970s

Adonis M. Y. Li, University of Lincoln

The relationship between Hong Kong's colonial state and its society has been scrutinised by scholars over many years. The Kowloon-Canton Railway, operated by the government's Railway Department, was a key part of this relationship, bringing the residents of Hong Kong face-to-face with government employees in trains, on platforms, and in the newspaper columns. How did this relationship play out, especially when accidents and emergencies occur? How did the government and the press attempt to use stories of accidents for their own purposes? How should historians deal with accounts of trauma as encountered in the archives? This paper is a methodological and source-based reflection on history writing through colonial archives. It uses the Kowloon-Canton Railway as a unique case study: as an ethnic Chinese-led department amongst mostly expatriate-led departments, and as an extension of urban Hong Kong into the then-rural New Territories. It argues that, despite these peculiarities, the railway authorities acted towards its constituents with a dismissive attitude not dissimilar to that of other government departments, and thus expands our understanding of the state-society(-passenger) relationship in post-war colonial Hong Kong.

Laughter in the Dark: Dayo Wong, (Post)Comedy, and Collective Catharsis in Post-2019 Hong Kong Cinema

Wayne Wong, University of Sheffield

This paper argues that the unexpected resurgence of post-2019 Hong Kong cinema at the box office can be attributed to collective catharsis, where comedy has emerged as a crucial conduit for repressed anger and pain, embodied by the ex-stand-up comedian turned movie star, Dayo Wong.

Existing scholarship on comedy in Hong Kong cinema often frames the genre as absurdist escapism reflective of sociopolitical transitions, as exemplified by Stephen Chow's nonsensical (Mo Lei Tou) humor in the 1990s, which grappled with anxieties surrounding the 1997 handover. However, limited attention has been paid to how comedy in post-2019 Hong Kong films articulates suppressed emotions in an era of unprecedented political repression, particularly through enigmatization—a hermeneutic strategy that preserves local expressions within privileged interpretive communities. This paper examines Wong's key films, both within and beyond the comedy genre (or "post-comedy"), including *Table for Six* (2022), *A Guilty Conscience* (2023), and *The Last Dance* (2024), as cinematic sites of catharsis where audiences engage in commemorative practices and mass solidarity. By embodying a subtle nostalgia for Hong Kong's past—a time of relative democracy and freedom of expression—Wong's "post-comedic" performances resonate with audiences as vehicles for collective anger, mourning, and redemption. This nostalgia is encoded through Wong's comedic delivery and witty dialogues, which preserve a uniquely local sensibility and create an intimate bond with in-group audiences seeking a connection to a disappeared past. The analysis highlights Wong's post-comedic style—his embodiment of socio-political critique—as resonant with Hong Kong audiences' need for indirect resistance and emotional release in politically constrained environments. Situating Wong's box office success within the broader context of Hong Kong's political shifts, this paper underscores the transformative power of (post)comedy and cinema as sites of collective memory and resistance, reframing the discourse on Hong Kong's cultural resilience.

Hong Kong within Global History **David Clayton, University of York**

With the literature on Hong Kong history now extensive and growing year-on-year, this paper provides a timely synoptic overview and seeks to situate this scholarship within a global/imperial framework. It identifies how historians have explored five aspects of Hong Kong's trajectory which were, it is argued, the legacy of globalising liberal empire project dating back to the mid nineteenth century. These aspects were: (i) the limited *consequences* for imperial tax payers arising from the consolidation and continuation of colonial rule; (ii) a *relentless quest for growth* that disregarded the environmental costs of international trade, industrialisation and affluence; (iii) the enabling of *white do-gooders* seeking to protect vulnerable peoples and extend welfare, albeit highly selectively; (iv) a reliance on *imperial and transnational networks* to create opportunities for capital flight and emigration; (v) pervasive *repression and racism* that was rarely subject to official investigation and sanction.

A0106 Cultural (Re)Mediation of Memories of Chinese Wartime Pasts [P]

The twentieth century saw China entangled in multiple conflicts – the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Civil War, the Korean War, and the Sino-Vietnamese War – which generated profound experiences of violence, trauma, and resistance. Today, these wartime pasts are dynamically revisited and represented across diverse media and cultural practices. This panel investigates the cultural (re)mediation of war memories, exploring how Chinese wartime experiences are (re)mediated and remembered through various media forms and how these memories are transformed in response to shifting social needs and contexts. Chaired by Dr Bingbing Shi, this interdisciplinary panel addresses war-related experiences, memories, and legacies as expressed in fiction, poetry, painting, film, and interactive digital media. Shuyue Liu explores how Lisa See's *Shanghai Girls* represents Chinese American performativity during the Second Sino-Japanese War, World War II, and the Cold War, revealing how diaspora identities negotiate war legacies through gendered and ethnic performances. Yuan Liu examines how Wing Tek Lum's ekphrastic poetics and Neo Tanigawa's responsive paintings (re)mediate visual memories of the Nanjing Massacre, proposing a non-linear, participatory mode of spectatorship that transcends mono-medium narratives of historical trauma. XU Jie investigates how interactive digital storytelling methods

archive oral histories of Chinese comfort women, highlighting how digital humanities methodologies address obscured historical issues in China and restore agency to survivors. Rianna Rong analyses how the state-sponsored film *The Battle at Lake Changjin* constructs cultural memory of the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea, uncovering the interplay between popular culture and memory politics in contemporary China. Finally, Shaoyu Yang examines how contemporary Chinese literature mediates and negotiates memories of the Sino-Vietnamese War in evolving socio-political contexts of mainland China since the 1980s, investigating the contested war memories in Chinese literary landscapes. Collectively, the panel advances a more nuanced understanding of multilayered cultural (re)mediation of memories of Chinese wartime pasts.

Reimagining Chinese American Performativity in the Shadow of Wars in Shanghai Girls

Shuyue Liu, University of Nottingham

Early-twentieth-century China, marked by the Sino-Japanese War and the Chinese Civil War, was a period of turmoil. While these events have garnered significant attention for their impact on Chinese citizens at home, Chinese American literature offers an additional perspective, exploring how Chinese immigrants in America experience this history not only as a source of national trauma but also as a period that complicated their identities amid U.S. involvement in the Asia-Pacific world. Drawing on Judith Butler's concept of 'gender performativity,' this article illustrates how Lisa See's *Shanghai Girls* (2009) represents Chinese American performativity during the Second Sino-Japanese War, World War II, and the Cold War through two sisters' diaspora from a wartime China to America, a land perceived as free but one that compels them to perform their ethnicity. Through the sisters' journey, the novel traces Chinese American performativity to their detention at Angel Island, where they adopt fabricated identities through the 'paper son' scheme to circumvent America's exclusionary immigration system. As they settle in Los Angeles, the novel further explores performativity through Pearl's depiction of Chinatown as a space shaped by Hollywood's Orientalist gaze, commodified cultural practices, and hidden family histories. Despite their escape from China's unrest, the sisters remain haunted by the shadows of war, which shape their performative identities as they navigate shifting U.S. policies and ethnic norms that demand conformity to and resistance against prescribed notions of Chineseness. By its conclusion, the novel invites readers to understand ethnic performativity as a precarious construct that must give way to a quest for collective history, family legacy, and individual subjectivity. Through its intertwining of wartime history and personal experience, *Shanghai Girls* complicates diasporic identity amid the clash of political ideologies, deconstructs the prescriptive norms of Chineseness, and reimagines the possibilities of ethnicity beyond performative constraints.

Mediating Visual Trauma: Ekphrasis, Intermediality and Postmemorial Art in Wing Tek Lum's the Nanjing Massacre: Poems (2012)

Yuan Liu, University of Glasgow

This paper examines the visual memories of the Nanjing Massacre as (re)mediated in Wing Tek Lum's *The Nanjing Massacre: Poems* (2012) and Neo Tanigawa's responsive paintings. Lum's documentary poetics evinces an obsession with photographs of violence, as manifest through extensive ekphrastic writings featuring his inquisitive and visually literate engagement with the behind-the-scenes historical experiences that the photograph, in its instantaneous slice of time, necessarily excludes. To explore how Lum's spectatorial looking interrogates the structures of the photographic gaze embedded within the perpetrator image with its status as 'souvenirs of cruelty', I first take as a weaving thread the fetishistic iconography of the *guntō*, or military sword wielded by the imperial Japanese soldier, as critically mediated in Lum's poems that de-naturalise its association with militarised hypermasculinity emblazoned in Japanese wartime propaganda. While confronting the evidentiary force of the photographs' claim to 'truth', Lum takes a 'leap of faith' by thematising the conditions of their own making, as he emplots a stagecraft of the decapitation scene for the camera, which critiques the swordsmanship on display as inseparable from its mediation. His

recurrent lyric dramatisations of Japanese new recruits' psychological turmoil and conscripted infantrymen robbed of agency as they struggle to perform the kill-or-be-killed imperatives of *bushido*, lay bare the systemic violent socialisation of flesh-and-blood perpetrators caught up in the codes of unquestioning obedience and death-before-dishonour. Tanigawa's picturing of ekphrasis, a reverse direction of image-becoming-text, compounds the collapse of martial masculinity, with images abounding that foreground the wound in the psyche and body politics. In juxtaposing poetic, photographic, and painterly mediation of visual knowledge, I challenge the status of post-memorial work as self-contained aesthetic objects by revealing the partiality and circumscription of mono-medium knowledge production; I propose instead a non-linear, participatory culture of spectatorship that demands dialogic reading and looking beyond the frame.

The Girl and the Picture: Digital Storytelling and Survivor Agency in the Testimonies of Chinese Comfort Women

Jie (Jocelyn) Xu, University of York

The term 'comfort women', an English translation of the Japanese euphemism 'weianfu' (慰安婦), refers to the tens of thousands of women who were recruited, coerced, or forcibly conscripted as sexual slaves for the Japanese military during the Asia-Pacific War (1931-1945). By 2023, approximately one hundred survivors of the comfort women system in China had provided documented oral testimonies. Among these survivors, Madam Peng Zhuying's testimony was comprehensively recorded through the USC Shoah Foundation's New Dimensions in Testimony (NDT) program, which employs an interactive three-dimensional question-and-answer methodology. Such technology plays a significant role to collect, preserve, and disseminate wartime survivors' testimonies cross world. This paper uses Hayden White's concept of historiophoty (historical representation through visual media) to study how interactive digital testimony systems shape our understanding of history. It argues AI-powered platforms allow users to engage in real-time conversations with recorded survivor testimonies, creating more meaningful connections to both personal and collective historical memories. The paper starts to examine digital narratives from the perspective of historiophoty, analysing their production, implementation, and the integration of survivors' accounts in museum contexts. It will then demonstrate evidence in Chinese museums focusing on the Second Sino-Japanese War, where digital tools help visitors—both Chinese and international—critically examine historical narratives and their gaps. Thirdly, the paper will investigate how audiences engage with the memory of the Second Sino-Japanese War through their emotional reception of these digital narratives. Notably, this paper represents the first scholarly examination of audio testimonies from Second Sino-Japanese War survivors. This study aims to demonstrate how digital humanities methodologies can address complex and obscured historical issues in China. Beyond facilitating the preservation of survivor testimonies for educational purposes, the NDT methodology serves as a mechanism for restoring agency to comfort women survivors through the preservation and deployment of their images and voices.

Representations and Remembrances of the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War in Contemporary Chinese Literature

Shaoyu Yang, University of Warwick

This paper investigates the intersection of literary representations and memories of the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War in the evolving socio-political surroundings of mainland China. More than forty-five years have passed since China's 'Self-Defensive Counterattack against Vietnam', and with the normalisation of bilateral relations between China and Vietnam since 1991, the war has been downplayed to a certain extent in Chinese public discourse. Focusing on this 'forgotten war', the study explores the remembering and forgetting of this past in the interplay between literary creation and the politics of memory in mainland China since the 1980s. The case study centres on Li Cunbao's *Wreaths at the Foot of the Mountain* (1982), Zhu Xiuhai's *Traversing Death* (1995), and Mo Yan's *Reunion of Comrades-in-Arms* (2001). The paper first delineates the trajectories of re-edition and

republication of these works, along with the evolution of their paratextual elements, to demonstrate literature's role as a medium for the mnemonic transmission of the war in changing contexts. Through close reading and comparative textual analysis, the study further examines the narrative strategies used to portray the experiences of soldiers during combat and postwar recollections, including contested depictions of heroism and posthumous narration. Compared with other Chinese wartime pasts that dominate official, mainstream narratives and with war commemorations characterised by multimodality and intermedial dynamics, the remembrances of the Sino-Vietnamese War – subject to state sanctioning and marginalised in Chinese memoryscapes in the present day – may find possible ways through literary (re)productions and representations.

A0107 Cultural Resilience in the Recession Era: Strategies, Policy Shifts, and Community Connections in Chinese Museums [P, H]

In the context of China's rapid economic development and museum boom, this panel presents a timely exploration of how Chinese museums are navigating the challenges and opportunities. Through the lens of cultural resilience, it examines innovative economic strategies, policy adaptations, and community engagement that are shaping the evolving museum landscape. Rooted in rigorous fieldwork and critical analysis, this discussion highlights key transformations in cultural governance, digital innovation, and the delicate balance between commercialization and public service. Against the backdrop of China's push for cultural confidence and the integration of traditional heritage with contemporary innovation, the first subtopic, *Fluid Heritage: Transnational Narratives and Cultural Identity*, explores how Chinese museums address repatriation disputes, transnational heritage discourses, and the evolving role of cultural identity in a globalized world. This reflects China's increasing influence in global cultural governance and its strategic efforts to reclaim and reinterpret its heritage. The second subtopic, *Digital Transformation: Technology and Public Engagement*, examines how Chinese museums are harnessing digital technologies to expand public access, enhance visitor experiences, and preserve cultural heritage. As part of China's national strategy of digital innovation, these advancements are reshaping museum engagement and redefining the role of cultural institutions in a rapidly evolving technological landscape. The third subtopic, *Marketization and Non-Marketization in Chinese Museums*, critically assesses the tension between commodification and the public service mission of museums. This discussion reflects broader debates in China on the role of culture in a market-driven economy and the strategies museums employ to balance financial sustainability with their core museological and educational responsibilities. Bringing together scholars and industry practitioners from various research institutions and the frontline cultural sector, this panel adopts a two-way interactive approach with keynote speeches and nominated discussants. It fosters a dynamic, interactive discussion that integrates diverse perspectives to explore the localized understanding of Chinese museums.

Subtopic 1: Fluid Heritage: Transnational Narratives, Property Disputes, and Cultural Identity in Museums

Breaking the Silence: Museums and Sex Education

Xingyue Yang, University of Glasgow; Mingyuan Jiang (Discussant-online), Australian National University; Yaxuan Chen (Discussant), Fudan University

Museums are increasingly recognized as spaces for informal education, particularly in addressing sensitive and socially stigmatized topics such as sex education and sexual violence prevention. In China, where formal sex education remains largely absent in school curricula, museums can play a critical role in bridging this gap. This presentation examines the Childhood Secret Archives (CSA) in Chengdu, a pioneering museum that actively engages in museum activism to foster public awareness of child sexual abuse, gender-based violence, and self-protection education. Through interactive exhibitions, anonymous archives, and community-centred programs, CSA provides a safe space for children, parents, and educators to openly discuss issues related to sexual violence and gender equality. The museum not only facilitates public education but also extends its impact through outreach initiatives in rural communities, where sex education is even more limited. Additionally,

CSA collaborates with psychologists, social workers, and legal professionals to ensure a comprehensive and ethical approach to handling sensitive content. This presentation explores the museum's role as an alternative educational institution, analysing how CSA navigates the cultural taboos surrounding sex education in China. Using publicly available museum records, media reports, academic literature, and interviews with founder Hu Yanzi, this study highlights CSA's innovative methods in promoting sex education, its challenges in sustainability and public acceptance, and its broader implications for museum activism in conservative societies. Ultimately, this research underscores how museums can function as social agents of change, offering alternative spaces for public discourse on issues often excluded from formal education. By examining CSA's model, this presentation contributes to the broader discussion on how museums worldwide can engage in activism to promote social justice and child protection.

Subtopic 2: Technology Empowerment and Narrative Innovation: The Digital Transformation of Museums and Public Engagement

Reimagining Space as Narrative: Enhancing Cultural Resilience through Spatial Storytelling in Museums

Chenyang Huang, Fudan University; Xin Gao (Discusant-online), Columbia University

In the face of the dual challenges of globalization and digitalization, museum exhibitions must explore narrative innovations that do not rely on technology, in order to address the cultural resilience challenges posed by economic downturns. This paper uses spatial storytelling as a theoretical lens to critique the current fragmented approach in Chinese museums, where "narrative text takes precedence and spatial design is subordinate," leading to issues of narrative flattening and weakened audience perception. Based on case studies of current museum exhibitions in China, this paper reveals the narrative potential of exhibition spaces, including the transformation of structural sequences, the blending of story discourses, and the use of multisensory metaphors. Drawing on the spatial turn in narrative theory, this paper argues that space is an active participant in the construction of exhibition narratives. It proposes that museums should integrate spatial and narrative approaches from other disciplines, introduce spatial awareness into both narrative content and expression, and coordinate exhibition text planning with spatial design at three levels to promote the deep coupling of space and narrative. By re-examining the characteristics of exhibition spaces and deepening spatial storytelling, this paper aims to provide a narrative innovation path for museums in the digital age that focuses on the intrinsic qualities of space, enhancing humanistic resilience.

Subtopic 3: Marketization and Non-Marketization Practices in Chinese Museums

Rethinking the Intangible Cultural Heritage Museums in China

Junjie Su, Di Cheng, University College London

Intangible cultural heritage museum (ICH museum) has been a new way to "make" ICH through museum. This research explores whether or not ICH can be exhibited in museums and if so, on the one hand, what kind of ICH is being made in museums; on the other hand, the covert implications of these exhibitions, such as commodification and asymmetry of power and rights. This research takes a "critical heritage studies" approach to investigate how the government and social stakeholders, such as ICH practitioners, museum curators, visitors, participate the construction of ICH museums in China. The focus, nevertheless, will be given to the subjectivities and agencies of ICH practitioners and/or ICH community members. In this research, four kinds of ICH museums in five provinces in China are examined. The first is a "conventional museum mode" where ICH elements are objectified and museumified; the second is a "eco-museum mode" where museum acts as the information centre or guiding spot; the third is a "ICH practitioners in residence mode" where the ICH practitioners/inheritors are employed by the museum and practice their ICH there for a long term; and the fourth is a "in-situ mode" which means the museum is situated in the ICH workshop in-situ.

Sale Red Stories—Shanghai Red Culture and Cultural and Creative Industry

Di Cheng, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg; He Ren (Discussant), China Guardian

Culture and Creative Industry is a commercial activity based on culture, which is becoming increasingly important in China as the government pays more attention to cultural development. Today, more and more revolutionary heritages are being used in the cultural and creative industries, and “Red” is being sold to drive national economic growth and cultivate new ideology support for communist party among the younger generation. This article takes Shanghai, a city that combines business and ideological publicity, as the research object to analyse the different practices of cultural and creative industries it has developed, its publicity methods, and its relationship with national policies and the economy. Based on the case study, this article shows the implicit revolutionary discourse behind commercial activities and how to strengthen communist identity through history.

A0108 Navigating Family, Gender, and Generational Change: New Perspectives on Contemporary Chinese Families [P]

This panel brings together four innovative studies that explore the evolving dynamics of family, gender roles, and intergenerational relationships in contemporary China. Drawing on qualitative research across diverse urban and rural contexts, these papers collectively interrogate the sociocultural transformations reshaping Chinese families and individual subjectivities in the face of modernisation, globalisation, and changing policy landscapes. The first paper examines urban middle-class millennial fathers’ navigation of caregiving and breadwinning responsibilities, shedding light on the cultural expectations and strategies shaping modern Chinese fatherhood. The second paper focuses on the unique case of reciprocal IVF among lesbian couples, exploring how relationality and sociocultural norms influence their reproductive decisions within a heteronormative and patrilineal family structure. The third paper delves into the intensive engagement of middle-class mothers with their children’s extracurricular activities, revealing the ambivalence, anxieties, and dynamic negotiations embedded in middle-class mothering practices. The fourth paper investigates intergenerational gifting practices in rural communities, offering insights into how reciprocity reinforces generational identities and contributes to the construction of generational orders. The last paper explores parent-child relationships in the context of Chinese LGB+ young people coming out to their parents, uncovering a complex dynamic of parental acceptance. Together, these papers challenge existing frameworks and advance sociological understanding of family life in contemporary China. They uncover how individuals and families actively navigate cultural norms, institutional structures, and broader societal expectations while shaping and reshaping their lived realities. By highlighting the interplay between continuity and change, this panel underscores the fluid and contested nature of family practices in modern China. It invites broader reflection on the implications of these practices for social cohesion, identity construction, and intergenerational mobility. Ultimately, this panel emphasises the importance of examining Chinese family life as a dynamic site where tradition and modernity, individual agency and collective norms, and gendered expectations and changing realities intersect, shaping the trajectories of contemporary Chinese families.

Understanding Contemporary Chinese Fatherhood: Cultures and Practices of Urban Middle-Class Millennial Fathers

Haoyue Tan, University College London

This paper presents cutting-edge findings from an on-going doctoral project investigating the cultural perceptions of fatherhood and the everyday fathering practices of urban middle-class millennial fathers in contemporary China. Drawing on semi-structured interviews conducted with 23 cohabiting couples and individual interviews with nine fathers and two mothers from different households in Chongqing, a mega-city in southwest China, the paper paints a vivid picture of fathers’ daily life, whilst also developing theoretical explanations of the cultural norms and everyday practices surrounding contemporary Chinese fatherhood. Although fathers are still culturally

expected to be the primary breadwinners, a role that has been further intensified by the shift from a centrally planned economy to a more neoliberal, market-oriented system. Fathers are also increasingly expected to be competent caregivers. This shift includes expectations of a more "intimate" fatherhood, where fathers are involved in nurturing and, as effective educators, tasked with cultivating their children to become responsible citizens. However, Chinese men's ideologies surrounding intensive child-rearing differ markedly from Western approaches. They tend to prioritise academic achievement and family upbringing over concerns about daily care. This paper, therefore, explores the dominant discourse surrounding the ideal of fatherhood in contemporary China, examining how fathers navigate and enact these family practices in accordance with this ideal. It further considers how fathers strategically utilise available family resources (e.g., grandparental involvement, outsourcing) to manage child-rearing arrangements and achieve their conception of ideal fatherhood and how they assert hegemonic masculinities through caregiving practices. As a whole, this research contributes to scholarship regarding the continuities and changes in fatherhood by exploring their thoughts and actions during the reflexive learning process of becoming fathers. It offers insights into how fatherhood has evolved or remained over time and underscores the sociocultural factors shaping the experiences of millennial Chinese fathers whilst also pointing to intergenerational continuities and transformations in Chinese fatherhood.

Reciprocal IVF Decision-Making Among Lesbian Couples in Mainland China: A Relational Approach **Xuerui Hu, University College London**

This study undertakes an in-depth exploration into why lesbians in mainland China decide to choose reciprocal in vitro fertilization (IVF). Reciprocal IVF is a specific form of IVF procedure, whereby one woman undergoes the retrieval of her eggs for in vitro fertilization using donor sperm, and another woman carries the resulting embryos and gives birth to the baby. Drawing on the framework of relationality, this study shows that their decision is an ongoing, dynamic process of relating with their same-sex partners and parents, which is shaped by 1) the broader social structures of the hukou system, 2) cultural norms of the patrilineal family, 3) multigenerational family values and bio-normativity in family, and 4) the increasing dominant narrative of commercialized surrogacy. Thus, this study highlights the mutually constitutive relations between sociocultural norms and technologies and challenges the notions of isolated personhood implied in theories of modernity.

Negotiating Contemporary Chinese Motherhood: Middle-Class Mothers and the Dynamics of Extracurricular Activities in Urban China **Yifei Sun, University of Bristol**

The phenomenon of "chicken parenting" (鸡娃) has gained increasing attention among urban China, referring to the intense involvement of children in a variety of extracurricular activities (ECAs). While middle-class parenting, particularly mothering, has been widely studied, limited attention has been paid to the decision-making processes and the dynamics behind mothers' involvement in ECAs. This study seeks to examine how middle-class mothers make decisions and manage their children's ECAs, with particular focus on their reflections on prior attendance and outcomes. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of "concerted cultivation" and "intensive mothering", originally conceptualised in the Western context, both recognized as ideals of "good" middle-class parenting, this research interrogates how these models unfold in the Chinese context. This study employs qualitative research methods of the seven-month fieldwork in Harbin and Shanghai based on observations and 33 in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with urban middle-class mothers born in the post-1980s era, each with at least one child aged 10 to 13. Preliminary findings suggest that while mothers often initiate ECAs based on their own aspirations, the decision-making process is highly dynamic. Over time, mothers gain a deeper understanding of their children's preferences, hobbies, and non-verbal cues, which often challenge their initial expectations. Contrary to the "tiger mother" model associated with traditional Chinese authoritarian parenting, this study argues that middle-class mothering in this context is a two-way process. Children's reactions, such as

resistance or disengagement, may disrupt mothers' initial plans, resulting in domestic tensions and negotiations. In turn, these interactions reshape mothers' perspectives on their children's growth and educational cultivation. This research challenges the prevailing portrayal of middle-class mothering as a process characterised by rational decision-making for social reproduction of class. Instead, it reveals a more complex and evolving process marked by middle-class mothers' ambivalence, anxiety, and adaption.

Reciprocity in Familial Intergenerational Gifting Practices: Constructing Generational Orders

Ruiqi Deng, University College London

Drawing on the ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in a rural community in southwest China, including interviews with 15 children, I will unpack how familial intergenerational gifting practices operate with reciprocity in a different way from what is proposed by previous literature, position children as debtors in both moral and financial senses, and more broadly, make indebtedness an essence of childhood in the context of contemporary China. Previous literature often proposes that gifting invariably creates reciprocal and obligated social relations, which would otherwise turn into a hierarchical one when the obligation is unfulfilled, where those who fail to reciprocate with a counter-gift are positioned as inferior (e.g., losing honour). It implies the rule of reciprocity is part and parcel of gifting and assumes gifting is, or should be, a balance-seeking game—though indebtedness may be created, it is a transient and repayable one with the possibility that balance/equality can be restored somehow. I suggest that taking children's gifting practices into account makes the case that intergenerational hierarchies, instead of resulting from not reciprocating, are both the source and product of the very act of children giving gifts to older generational position holders, say their parents. Such gifts literally symbolise the persistent and nearly insolvent debts children are thought to owe.

Learning Child's LGB+ Identities in Nowadays China: A Dynamic Process of Adaptation and Acceptance

Fengqiang Wang, University of Bristol

Disclosing one's sexual orientation – commonly referred to as 'coming out of the closet' or 'coming out' – to parents is a pivotal life event for many LGB+ individuals. While research on coming out to parents has predominantly been conducted in Western context, studies in China have largely focused on the pressures faced by young LGB+ individuals and their coping strategies, thus leaving the process of parental acceptance an underexplored area. Drawing on my PhD research, this paper examines this dynamic process of LGB+ young people's coming out to their parents and parental acceptance. Employing a qualitative methodology, this study conducted semi-structured interviews with 28 participants, including 14 young adults and 14 parents. These interviews were first conducted with parents and their adult children together, followed by individual follow-up interviews with the young participants. The findings reveal that parental acceptance is influenced by several key factors. First, young participants' individuality and authority in asserting their sexual orientation played a significant role. Second, parents transitioning from traditional family values, such as '*chuanzong jiedai*' ('传宗接代', literally means continuing the family lineage) toward a more individualised perspective that prioritises their children's wellbeing is another key factor. Third, mothers, in particular, served as primary supporters to their child, were a central figure in fostering family acceptance and navigating societal pressures. In addition, same-sex partners were another support system for young participants' parents to accept their child's sexual identity. Last but not least, feedback from psychological professionals, who affirmed that being *tongxinglian* ('同性恋', means homosexual) is nothing about being abnormal or indicative of mental illness, further facilitated acceptance. This paper provides invaluable insights into the process of parents' acceptance and a picture of Chinese families' transitioning towards to a more individual-centred neo-familism family structure.

A0109 Gender, Legacies and Identities: Bridging Migrant Regions and Hometowns of Overseas Chinese [P]

This panel explores the dynamic interplay among economics, gender, and identities of overseas Chinese communities, focusing on how migration shaped and was shaped by historical, socio-political, and economic contexts. The three papers collectively examine the ways in which overseas Chinese navigated their gendered roles, contributed to their host societies, and maintained connections to their ancestral homelands, offering nuanced perspectives on labour, power, and cinema. The first paper examines the economic adaptation of Chinese Thai women, particularly the emergence of *Jae* (姊, self-employed female merchants), as a response to socio-political marginalization during the Phibunsongkram era. It reveals how these women strategically navigated gendered and economic constraints to achieve financial independence, challenging traditional family structures. The second paper investigates the historical memory of *zishunü* (自梳女, returned overseas Chinese single women who were celibate filial daughters) through the lens of museums in Guangdong. This paper underscores the tension between collective national identity and individual agency, revealing how cultural legacies are constructed and contested in the context of migration and return. The third paper shifts focus to Southeast Asian Chinese-language cinema, exploring how documentary filmmaking represent the transformation of Chinese identities in the tropics. By combining visual storytelling and theoretical analysis, it examines the role of geography, environment, and diasporic experiences in shaping cultural identity. Together, these papers illuminate the diverse ways in which Chinese communities negotiated cultural legacies and national identities, bridging their migrant regions and hometowns through economic adaptation, historical memory, and cinematic representation. They collectively contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities of migration, identity, and cultural continuity in the sense of Chineseness.

‘Jae’ Chinese Thai Female Merchants and Thai Markets, 1930s-1960s

Jaruwan Teanmahasatid, SOAS University of London

Traditionally, Chinese society maintained a strict gender division for work within commercial communities, with women being expected to become housewives and largely excluded from business activities. However, in Thailand, the term *Jae* (姊)—derived from the Teochew word for sister (姊)—came to represent self-employed female merchants, reflecting a shift in economic roles of Thai women of Chinese descent. This transformation was not simply a rejection of traditional gender roles but rather a strategic adaptation to socio-political and economic constraints. During the nationalist policies of the early Phibunsongkram era (1938–1944), the Thai government marginalized Chinese communities by closing Chinese schools and restricting formal employment, pushing many Chinese descendants into trade. While Chinese men traditionally dominated commerce and had greater access to financial, social, and human capital, Chinese women were relegated to household responsibilities with minimal participation in financial decision-making. However, the oral history interviews are based on suggest that they gradually gained control over family finances and decision-making under specific conditions: the decline of brotherhood networks and secret societies, the cessation of Republic of China currency payments in the 1940s, and financial mismanagement by male family members due to gambling or failed business ventures. Faced with these socio-economic transformations, many Chinese Thai women abandoned their prescribed domestic roles and entered self-employment, particularly in low-profit, small-scale businesses such as fresh food markets. Although still constrained by gendered divisions of labour, their increased economic participation challenged traditional family structures. The emergence of *Jae* as a distinct demographic of self-managed female entrepreneurs highlights how Chinese Thai women strategically navigated socio-political restrictions to carve out independent financial roles in a male-dominated society.

Remembering Zishunü: How Museums Preserve the Legacies and Shape the Narratives of Single Women

Ruoran Pei, SOAS University of London

This paper introduces two museums in Guangdong dedicated to the history of returning overseas Chinese single women (*zishunü* 自梳女): Bingyutang in Shunde, Foshan, and Yihetang in Changping, Dongguan. It explores how the official narrative shapes the historical memory of *zishunü* by showcasing their stories in the returnee *zishunü* museums. These institutions highlight the legacy of *zishunü*, their contributions to their hometowns, and the transmission of patriotic and familial values to future generations. Following the prevailing narrative that prioritizes the collective interest over individual choice and under the influence of Confucianism and the patriarchal family marriage system, which is dominated by the social value of prioritizing the continuation of the lineage, *zishunü* are generally recognized by mainstream society and the government for their dedication to sacrificing the small for the greater good. As the idea of remaining single, which ultimately is what *zishunü* stand for, is not endorsed by the authorities, mainstream reports often depict their life choices (not getting married and living independently) in a pessimistic light. Therefore, in these museums, too, *zishunü* are portrayed as a group of pitiful women who were forced by feudal society to choose to spend their lives alone, making great sacrifices and contributions to the local community and their families. Compared to those who stayed in China, the returned overseas *zishunü* celebrated in these museums received greater official recognition due to their economic and cultural contributions. Thus, although the phenomenon of *zishunü* greatly differs from modern Western feminism, I argue that these women were pioneers of female independence in modern China, an aspect of their lives the museum narratives attempt to bury. This study also offers valuable insights for contemporary gender discussions. It highlights the need to improve single women's rights and acknowledges that gender equality in China still has a long way to go.

Diasporic Chinese Identities in Southeast Asian Tropical Space – A Visual Representation

Hanxiang Zhang, SOAS University of London

Following the pandemic and conflicts around the world, identity politics are once again in the spotlight. The Chinese community has become a large part of Southeast Asia's multiracial society through Southeast Asia, which has been a chief destination for Chinese emigrants for millennia. Chinese-language cinema in Southeast Asia recently is turning to explore the transformation of Chinese identities in Southeast Asian societies. This PhD research will utilise visual storytelling techniques to explore the image of Southeast Asian Chinese in contemporary cinema, focusing on how the tropics as a geographical factor shape Chinese identity. It will comprise a new practice-based documentary film and a theory-based written thesis and will address the lack of examination of environmental issues in identity representation in Southeast Asian Chinese cinemas. The research project will engage with Stuart Hall, Edward Said, and Hamid Naficy's theories and use diasporic cinema, slow cinema, and environmental humanities as frameworks. As a filmmaker, the presenter will introduce his subjectivity to this autoethnographic research and discuss broader transcultural narratives and nuanced observations regarding intimacy. A short film was included in his research, which he made about his Chinese migration stories in Southeast Asia, *Hainanese Among Others* (2021). It innovatively uses landscapes to create a sense of absence and alienation through documentary filmmaking. It responds to his current research on the topic of the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia and the cinematic representation of space, environment, and migration. The project and the film were successfully presented at the College of Humanities Inaugural PGR Symposium SOAS in December 2024.

B0200 The Anxieties of Modernity in Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature: Technology, Power, and Gender [P]

Baudelaire once characterised modernity's properties as 'the transient, the fleeting, the contingent'. This ephemeral nature of modernity has given rise to an inevitable anxiety about the future. Within a century, Chinese people have gone from embracing modernity to confronting its dilemmas and drawbacks, finding themselves dizzy amidst rapid social, ideological and technological shifts. They

are experiencing a profound sense of upheaval, as their sense of subjectivity undergoes constant revision and disruption. Simultaneously, following the Vernacular Movement, the inability to draw on traditional cultural roots, poetic heritage and linguistic expressions to address dilemmas of modernity has given rise to another anxiety - one centred on historical disconnection and fractured literary identity. This panel explores how literary production and reception respond to the anxieties arising from China's ongoing modernisation. Each paper addresses a different yet interconnected dimension of anxiety, including technology, power and gender. Spanning from the early Republican era to the digital present, the panel engages with diverse texts and practices, from Ding Ling's overlooked short story, Ma Jian's political allegory, to Artificial Intelligence-generated poetry. We aim to answer three key questions: How to perceive and evaluate the anxieties provoked by technological intrusion into poetic and narrative practices? How does ideological control intensify anxiety surrounding literary expression and imagination in China's modernising society? And how do evolving gender norms generate ethical dilemmas and provoke identity anxiety for individuals within China's pursuit of modernisation? Through this panel, we advocate for a literary practice that actively engages with reality while enriching existing interpretative frameworks for understanding the challenges of modernity. Whether by embracing human-machine co-creation, rethinking the interplay between dream and reality, or integrating narrative bioethics with close and contextual reading, we aim to harness the reflective power of anxiety and literature to propose solutions for mitigating the side effects of modernity's progression.

Re-imagine Ways of Human-Machine Co-creation: A Critical Review of Contemporary Chinese Poetry and Artificial Intelligence's Entangled Practices

Xuemeng Zhang, SOAS University of London

In 2017, Microsoft's AI program Xiaoice published the 'first poetry collection written by a robot', sparking a phenomenal discussion on 'AI poetry' among Chinese scholars and poets. With further advancement of large language models such as ChatGPT and DeepSeek, using AI chatbots for poetry creation has inspired diverse literary experiments among the young generation. 'AI poetry' has attracted significant attention in Chinese scholarship. However, predominant academic discourse largely adopts humanist and anthropocentric theoretical perspectives, suggesting AI as a threat to human subjectivity. Moreover, much of the discourse implicitly reflects anxieties regarding the legitimacy and ontology of contemporary Chinese poetry, revealing the disruptions AI poetry causes to a precarious poetic tradition. These overlapping anxieties lead to a resistant stance toward AI-generated poetry among Chinese scholars, and current research lacks reflection and critique of existing paradigms and prevailing discourses. This study employs a critical review approach to trace the historical evolution of AI-generated poetry in China, examining relevant research and theoretical challenges. It focuses on published papers from 2017 to the present, with particular attention to Chinese databases such as CAJ/CNKI and Wanfang Data. Through this review, I aim to answer two key questions: How is 'AI poetry' conceptualised and perceived in Chinese scholarship? How has 'AI poetry' disrupted and challenged contemporary Chinese poetics? Building on this review, I propose a 'human-machine co-creation' framework for literary practitioners. In this model, humans and AI are no longer in an adversarial relationship; instead, they respectively mobilise creative agency and media characteristics to collaboratively produce literary works. Using poet Hsia Yu's *Pink Noise* and artist Chen Baoyang's AI-aided artworks as examples, I suggest that this framework may offer new insights into poetry creation and pedagogical practice.

The Crisis of Expression: Dream, Power and Modernity in China Dream and 'The Waking Dream'

Yuwei Li, SOAS University of London

From Zhuangzi's 'Butterfly Dream' to *Dream of the Red Chamber*, 'dream' has long carried metaphysical and symbolic significance in the Chinese philosophical and literary tradition. Beyond this tradition, the 'dream' itself has often provided an outlet for anxieties, be that about political repression through to the mundanity of everyday life. In two recent works, diasporic writer Ma Jian's

political allegory *China Dream* (2018) and mainland writer Fan Zhou's horror short story 'The Waking Dream' (2024), both situated in a 21st-century context of technological acceleration and intensified ideological control, the dream evolves into a site where power and anxiety of expression collide. In *China Dream*, idiomatic chapter titles and the implantation of a 'dream chip' expose the ideological colonisation of language and memory. In 'The Waking Dream', anxiety and horror emerge from a mechanism where the unspeakable is displaced into the monstrous via modern exploitation. Despite their formal differences, both texts show how power infiltrates the human sensorium through the dream. Drawing on Kaminski's (2024) argument that the 'Chinese Dream' functions as a modern political construct, I investigate how 'dreaminess' in both texts is reimagined as a condensed space where the crisis of expression converges with bodily and cognitive subjugation in a contemporary context; and how, paradoxically, the dream becomes a shelter for voice and resilience. Ultimately, the dream serves beyond a narrative device but also as a metaphorical terrain where the internal and external crises of literature converge. I argue that contemporary Chinese literature attempts, through dream, to reassert its capacity to intervene in reality. Within the overarching political dreamscape, literature grapples with how to reconstruct expression, and seek a possibility of 'awakening'.

The Ineffable Illness: Ethical Dilemmas, Female Identity and Modernity in Ding Ling's 'The Girl Ah Mao'

Xinyang Zhao, SOAS University of London

Published in 1928, Ding Ling's short story 'The Girl Ah Mao' has received relatively little scholarly attention, as it neither conveys the spiritual predicament of May Fourth female intellectuals, nor the intersection of gender and class found in her later socialist-realist writings. Ah Mao, a peasant girl, glimpses urban women's lives, develops an unrealistic fantasy, and falls ill upon realising it's unattainable, ultimately killing herself. Ah Mao's tragedy has often been read allegorically—as a critique of patriarchy, a parody of free love ideology, a symbol of urban-rural conflict, or a Chinese *Madame Bovary*. These interpretations, while valuable, tend to frame the female character as a symbol of ideological struggles, often overlooking the complex ethical dimensions of Ah Mao's suffering. This paper, however, applies narrative bioethics, a method typically used in medical practice, to examine how Ah Mao's illness and silence expose the ethical dilemmas between old and new gender norms and individual autonomy in China's transition to modernity. Focusing on her lived experience and the reactions and interpretations of those around her, this study shows how Ah Mao's growing self-awareness and inability to articulate her struggles contributed to her decline. Her illness is not merely the result of a shattered dream, but also stems from an emerging sense of female identity that, entangled with traditional gender norms, distorts her perception of individual destiny within an imagined modern life. This study not only adds to existing feminist interpretations of Ding Ling's female characters, but also proposes a new framework that integrates narrative bioethics with close and contextual reading to address the characters' ethical and existential ruptures during China's transition. By expressing their silence and ineffability in these dilemmas, Chinese literature presents its ongoing attempt to render individual subjectivity in modernity, an effort that continues in contemporary writing.

B0201 Teaching Post-Mao China as History [R]

Mark Baker, University of Manchester

Qiuyang Chen, University of Bristol

Song-Chuan Chen, Warwick University

Federica Ferlanti, Cardiff University

Tehyun Ma, University of Sheffield

Shirley Ye, University of Birmingham

This roundtable session will discuss the challenges of teaching post-Mao China as history. It is almost fifty years since the death of Mao Zedong, with nearly two-thirds of PRC history now in the post-Mao

era. Despite a challenging research environment, we are now benefitting from a burgeoning field of historical scholarship on China's reform era. But undergraduate survey courses on modern China/East Asia have sometimes been slow to incorporate the post-Mao decades as history. Speaking personally as the organiser of this roundtable, I have found it difficult to teach this period as three-dimensional history, rather than just an epilogue of economic take-off or a cursory top-down political narrative.

This teaching-focused discussion brings together historians with a wide range of research and teaching experiences. They will reflect on their own pedagogic practice to tackle questions, such as:

- What are the goals of teaching the history of China's recent decades? What do we want our students to get out of it? What might be students' goals in studying this period?
- What topics, readings, and methods can engage student interest? What themes from new research on the reform era can be incorporated into our teaching?
- What are some of the challenges of teaching this period?
- How has the Xi Jinping era changed perspectives on the reform era, and how far can/should we include the Xi period in our history teaching?
- More widely, what is the future of the 'modern China survey' module in a time of more thematic and team teaching?

Roundtable participants will give a short opening reflection on their own experience, before an open panel discussion on key questions. This session is intended as a useful spur to everyone's teaching practice, so plenty of time will be allocated for audience contributions, reflections, and questions.

B0202 Military Management: From Past to Present

The Ideal and Reality of Expansion: Rethinking King Zhao of Zhou's Military Failure from a Comparative Perspective

Xinyan Yu, University of Edinburgh

King Zhao of Zhou's (周昭王) military defeat in the south presents a turning point in Western Zhou history, as it marks the end of the dynasty's expansion and arguably the beginning of its decline. However, a detailed explanation of the exact impact of the event is often lacking, primarily due to the scarcity of information from the remote era. By adopting a comparative approach and setting the political trajectory of the Western Zhou against that of the Roman Republic, this paper seeks to provide a new interpretation of the event. The paper first examines the initial similarities between the two polities, particularly their shared need for continuous expansion to sustain the political institution. It then explores their divergence in political experience: while the Republic maintained the momentum of military and political expansion, culminating in a Mediterranean empire, the Zhou quickly fell into decline after an initial phase of growth. The paper attributes this divergence primarily to differences in military structure and political organization. Rome's early transition from an aristocratic to a citizen-based army ensured a steady supply of manpower and enabled rapid recovery from losses; in contrast, the Zhou military remained largely aristocratic for half a millennium, limiting its capacity to mobilize broader societal resources. Meanwhile, the exclusivity of Zhou identity further exacerbated the situation. Unlike the Roman absorptive practice of extending citizenship, the Zhou's decentralized *fenfeng* (分封) system encouraged the elites to develop distinct local identities, gradually making them politically non-Zhou. This centrifugal design further reduced the manpower available to the royal army and, over time, weakened local ties to the Zhou political centre. Within this context, the paper concludes that King Zhao's defeat represents not merely a military failure but a reflection of an inherent structural weakness, from which the dynasty would inevitably struggle to recover.

How the Spirit Was Broken: Realities, Communities, and Casualties in Wartime China through the Lens of Young Officers

Chuwei He, University of Edinburgh

This study examines *Wugang Monthly*, a journal published by the Second Branch of Central Military Academy, as a critical link between frontline officers and rear cadets during the post-1938 phase of the War of Resistance (1937–1945). The journal captures a diverse range of subjects and emotions recorded by its graduates as they navigated the war, including reflections on societal shortcomings and military weakness marked by anger, frustration, and humiliation. These firsthand accounts not only served as powerful incentives for cadets, whom the graduates affectionately called little brothers (*xiao didi*), in fostering nationalism, but also functioned as a tactical manual for military training. The publication included practical guidance, such as shooting techniques, protocols for interacting with superiors, and even agrarian knowledge, thereby fostering a fraternal imagined community where senior members positioned themselves as models for juniors to emulate, grounding their authority in the authenticity of frontline experience. The ethos was reinforced through practical solutions to challenges within their shared military environment, framing problem-solving as both an obligation and a means of preserving communal unity. Initially conceived as a tactical manual, the journal gradually evolved into a memorial that commemorated sacrifice and loss, reflecting the war's profound human and institutional toll. This transformation paralleled the erosion of cohesion within the National Revolutionary Army (NRA) as prolonged conflict disrupted the “imagined community” that once bound frontline graduates to academy cadets and bolstered the Kuomintang's (KMT) authority. Drawing on underutilized local archival materials from Hunan, this study reveals how grassroots experiences of trauma and resilience reshaped wartime identities, ultimately undermining the KMT's state-building agenda. By foregrounding the voices of young soldiers and cadets in their twenties, this research offers fresh insights into the human dimensions of China's wartime crisis and reveals how the Nationalist government failed to forge a cohesive wartime order.

B0203 Local Agency and Institutional Structures: Governance, Adaptation, and Conflict in Chinese Societies (18th–20th Centuries) [P]

This panel examines the interplay between local agency and institutional structures in Chinese societies across imperial and colonial contexts from the 18th to the 20th centuries. By focusing on the agency of Qing taxpayers, migrant communities, and ethnic Chinese groups, we explore how these local actors navigated, negotiated, and integrated into overarching governance systems. The first paper illustrates how tax reforms intended to centralize governance paradoxically entrenched corruption, triggering grassroots adaptation—complaints, petitions, and revolts—that exposed systemic flaws yet reinforced the state's reliance on displacing conflict downward, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of institutional rigidity and localized resistance. Rather than direct resistance, the second paper explores how Hakka migrants strategically embedded themselves within imperial structures to legitimize their marginal presence, thereby subtly redefining institutional norms through compliance. The third paper shifts to colonial Southeast Asia in which the interplay shifts again: post-bank collapse, ethnic Chinese communities navigated colonial hierarchies by hybridizing identities—invoking diasporic solidarity to mobilize networks while outwardly conforming to colonial regulations—turning financial crisis into a lever for renegotiating governance in a cosmopolitan environment. Across all cases, conflict (fiscal, social, economic) destabilizes institutions, prompting adaptation in forms of resistance (Qing taxpayers), assimilation (Hakka migrants), and hybridization (ethnic Chinese elites). Crucially, institutional structures are neither static nor monolithic: they are contested terrains where local agencies exploit ambiguities, transforming systemic weaknesses into spaces for renegotiation. By foregrounding the agency of diverse communities, this panel underscores the fluid boundaries between state control and local initiative, revealing the complexities of governance, adaptation, and conflict in different historical settings.

Is Corruption A Tax? ‘Illegal’ Fees, Daily Taxation, and Local Finances
Gongchen Yang, University of Warwick

The 17th-century scholar Huang Zongxi observed the fiscal and tax reforms of China's dynasties over the past 1,000 years, which were designed to reduce the fiscal burden by adhering to a fixed official tax target and eliminating or consolidating all additional (extra-legal) fees. Huang found, however, that despite the initial success of the reforms, rulers were often overcharged for the extra-legal fees they promised. Over time, this led to a vicious circle of fiscal reforms, broken promises and increasing tax. Similar to Huang's observation, recent research by economic historians has highlighted the inability of governments to make credible promises as one of the key reasons for the vicious circle of tax reform. Also focusing on the 'Huang Zongxi Rule', the focus of this study, however, is to explore the people's adaptation to tax reform from a micro perspective. People's attitudes are an important but understudied part of the tax reform theme. The fundamental purpose of the emperors to make or not to make tax reforms is to prevent conflict. Therefore, this study aims to explore why emperors did or did not make tax reforms by looking at whether the tax reforms satisfied the people more or less. Relying mainly on primary sources of tax revolts and petitions against taxes and illegal fees, this study argues that the reason why the government was happy to indulge in illegal fees (without tax reforms) was that the government wanted to shift tax conflicts to the bottom, which was easier to control than revolts against the state. In addition to this, this study looks at the interactions between state's agency (clerks, runners) and the people in the practice of taxation, contributing to the lasting debate on 'to what extent the agency represents the image of the state'.

The Social Adaptation of Hakka Immigrants in Taihe, Guangzhou During the Mid-Qing Dynasty
Xianxian Dai, University of Warwick

This study examines the social adaptation of Hakka immigrants in the Taihe region of Guangzhou during the mid-Qing Dynasty. In the 17th century, a large number of Hakka settlers migrated to Taihe due to the Qing Dynasty's land reclamation policy for military fields. Faced with economic, cultural, and political exclusion by the native population, the Hakka implemented proactive strategies to integrate into the imperial cultural system. They established ancestral halls, village regulations, market systems, and educational institutions to maintain internal order and facilitate social integration. These efforts gradually allowed the Hakka to assimilate into the social fabric of Guangzhou, securing their place and ensuring their survival in the region. The Hakka used ancestral halls to symbolize their bloodline identity and cultural heritage, thereby legitimizing their land rights. Village regulations, rooted in Confucian ethics and imperial-endorsed folk worship, functioned as a self-governance mechanism that oversaw village affairs and mediated disputes. By embracing values such as female chastity and the imperial examination system, the Hakka further aligned themselves with the Confucian framework, which enhanced their social standing. Meanwhile, the establishment of market systems served not only as an economic adaptation strategy but also to build their own social networks in a competitive environment. It further facilitated their self-governance, ensured community stability, and ultimately secured Hakka's place in the region. In this process, the Hakka people achieved a balance between integrating into the imperial framework and retaining their cultural identity and successfully integrated into the local society. This study reveals the adaptation patterns of immigrants in the new environment by analysing the cultural adaptation, economic development and community formation of the Hakka people in Taihe.

Banking Failure and Regulatory Reform on the Periphery: The Kwong Yik Bank in the British Straits Settlements

Jeremy Goh, University of Warwick

In 1903, a group of ten Cantonese businessmen and one Straits Chinese comprador formed the Kwong Yik Bank (KYB) in colonial Singapore, the capital of the British Straits Settlements. It was the first modern bank formed by the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia. A short-lived venture, the KYB failed after operating for a decade. This unexpected collapse led not only to public criticism against the opacity and supposed failings of ethnic Chinese enterprise, but also stricter regulations imposed

by the British colonial state on the finance and business sectors. These tightened measures were vehemently opposed by the European Legislative Members to a greater extent than their ethnic Chinese counterparts in the Legislative Council. This paper analyses the operations of the KYB and its failure, with particular emphasis on the impact of its collapse on the remaking of company regulations in the Straits Settlements. It draws upon official bank records held at the National Archives of Singapore, newspaper articles, as well as the private papers of Wong Ah Fook, the principal founder of the bank, at the Library of the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore. These invaluable papers include personal correspondence, primary biographical accounts, legislative minutes, and business documents in English, Chinese, Malay, and Jawi. Collectively, these sources demonstrate that stricter regulations were not merely enforced by the British colonial state in a top-down manner. Instead, they emerged from prolonged debates and negotiations between colonial administrators and representatives of corporate and banking interests, influenced by underlying racial and cultural assumptions. These discussions also highlight the complexities and ironies of categorizing businesses as 'Chinese,' 'British,' or 'Western,' considering the prevalence of similar and shared commercial practices. These findings highlight the complexity of economic governance, and the dynamic relationships between the colonizer and the colonized in a multicultural environment on the colonial periphery.

B0204 Nature, Environment, and Disaster

Theorisation of Environmental Justice in Traditional Chinese Political Philosophies

Shizhi Zhang, University of Sheffield

This paper starts from the premise that Chinese philosophical and political contexts offer a conceptual basis to develop principles of environmental justice, distinct from those derived from anglophone literature. Ideas of environmental justice are ubiquitous in socio-environmental movements. However, mainstream theories do not seem to be applicable across all cultural contexts. For example, in China, conventional understandings of environmental justice do not resonate with contemporary environmental politics. Current environmental policies in China are already having differentiated social impacts, and these will likely increase as transitions deepen. This raises environmental justice questions, calling for the development of appropriate theoretical tools to enable context-relevant analyses. Hence, looking for a Chinese perspective on environmental justice could advance theorisation and empirical insights in this field. In particular, Confucian and Legalist political philosophies in the pre-Qin era, which informed state-building practices in China, provide foundations to construct new conceptualisations of environmental justice. This paper analyses the concept of justice in relation to environmental politics in pre-Qin China, revealing two distinct approaches. The first, drawing on Confucianism, is embedded in the cultivation of relational moral codes and practices of benevolent governance. The second, based on Legalism, is based on ideals of impartiality and the imposition of authoritarian constraints to prevent immorality. Both approaches have become embedded in Chinese social-political life, with differentiated outcomes in terms of environmental justice.

Toward a Structural Mimesis: Writing (Like) Nature in Contemporary Chinese Poetry

Joanna Krenz, Adam Mickiewicz University

In the proposed paper, I will discuss different ways of Chinese contemporary poetry's engagement with nature, with the focus on its posthuman aspect. The first mode is the literati-style distanced contemplation of natural landscape reflected in aesthetically pleasing works of authors such as Chen Dongdong or Lü De'an. The second involves authors' immersion in the elemental nature infused with powers perceived as spiritual that slip into a poem and destabilize its structure from inside, opening it to new dimensions. This mode is present, for instance, in poems by ethnic minority authors, such as Luowulaqie or Lu Ruodiji, who try to convey the character of the indigenous naturecultures (D. Haraway's term) of their shrinking local communities in the standardized Mandarin language and conventionalized aesthetic forms. The third type, which will interest me the most, deemed here *con-*

versing with nature, implies attempts at a conscious incorporation of nonhuman languages, with their unique biosemiotics and biogrammars, in order to expand one's own poetics. Among such attempts, one may list Zang Di's experiment in a "botany of poetry", Ya Shi's romance with mathematics as the language of the Universe, Wenmang's ambitions to recreate quantum (non)logic in text, or Yin Xiaoyuan's multidisciplinary "encyclopaedic poetry" which morphs continuously, absorbing inspirations from disciplines as different as optics and ornithology. In all of these projects not only poems' content, but their very form, too, is cautiously melded in a mimetic manner, for it to reflect the dynamics of the natural world at different levels of its functioning, from the subatomic structures through cells, tissues, living organisms, and ecosystems, to the universe at large. In this perspective, poetry becomes a laboratory in which the possibilities of liberating language from anthroponormative order are tested.

Adaptive Characteristics and Resilience Mechanism of Living Environment oriented to disaster response: The Case of Longnan City, China

Wanke Liu, Beijing Forestry University

Longnan City is a scenic and productive region in southeastern Gansu Province, China, where the Bailong Rivers are surging through steep mountains. Due to its proximity to earthquake fault zones, frequent geological and meteorological disasters became a threat to locals. Therefore, Longnan City is a typical area coexisted with natural resources and hazard risks, where local residents have mastered the knowledge of seeking benefits but avoiding harms in the symbiosis with the chancy environment for decades, which greatly reflects the resilience of human habitat environment of Longnan. Based on human-land coupling system, GIS spatial analysis and spatial syntax are used to show spatial characteristics for disaster response, and explain how to built a resilience network for urban sustainability in mountain-water-human relationship. Taking the habitations in the Bailong River Basin as examples, this study analyses adaptive characteristics in three aspects: (1) Site selection: Residents retreat to the hillside instead of riverside for a high redundancy planning; (2) Drainage: The herringbone-shaped roads also function as water ditches to some extent, with the underground channels, that built a well-connected and efficient drainage network; (3) Buildings: Built across a height difference, multifunctional damyards are also known as the terrain adapted style. It is a prominent feature of a dominant position, both geographically and culturally. Then resilience mechanism is revealed that adaptability, resilience, and transformation become the three main forces. Through the assessment of planning land, ecological service of mitigation buffer and social organization as "monitoring-warning-responding" process are summarized for resilience enhancement strategy. This study proposes adaptive measures of geological hazards for urban and rural planning, and provides reference for resilience construction in other cities under similar disaster-risky situations.

B0205 Histories of Chinese Migration in Britain and the British Empire [P]

This panel features four papers investigating Chinese experiences across multiple localities within metropolitan Britain and the British empire from the mid nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. It brings together histories of Chinese migration in Britain with those from its empire in order to draw connections that might otherwise be overlooked. How, for example, did the so-called "Chinese Question" of migration to white settler colonies and the enforcement of colonial Chinese exclusion impact the lives of Chinese migrants in Britain itself? How were the preoccupations of metropolitan Britain reflected in the treatment of Chinese migrants to the empire? Each of our four papers utilises a wide array of primary sources and examines Chinese immigrants' racialised experiences in the context of regional preoccupations as well as prevalent concepts of race in western societies. Our first two presentations focus on diverse Chinese communities in England: Yuntian Xian begins with examining the nuances of early-20th century Chinese life in the port of Liverpool through the story of former "King of Chinatown" Lock Ah Tam. Next, Sha Zhou uses new oral history research to explore the lived experiences of Anglo-Chinese children raised in East

London's Limehouse Chinatown. Following this we turn to the imperial context. Ge Tang reads the petition of a Cantonese gold miner who was incarcerated in the lunatic asylum of colonial Melbourne as a site of negotiation and resistance. Nicholas McGee, in turn, explores the ways in which both state and society in China understood and confronted the indenture of the Chinese workers in the Transvaal. Finally, we are pleased to welcome Rachel K. Bright as discussant, who will use her expertise on histories of Chinese migration across the British empire to offer commentary on our four papers, and to draw connections between them.

Lock Ah Tam (1872-1926) and Labor Contracting of Chinese Seafarers in Early 20th-Century Liverpool

Yuntian Xuan, Rutgers University

In the late 19th century, British shipping companies' demand for cheap labour aligned with the availability of Chinese workers, bringing indentured seamen to Britain's waterfronts through a middlemen system called shipping master. By the early 20th century, Liverpool became Europe's largest Chinese community, predominantly composed of seafarers. Amid global Sinophobia, their presence fuelled the "Chinese Question," sparking political anxieties and racial discrimination. Current scholarship depicts them caught between racial exclusion and economic exploitation by shipping masters, relying on secret societies and native-place associations until prototypical unionization efforts in the 1920s. These narratives emphasize labour-capital conflict and racial confrontation as two independent agendas carried out by ideologically distinct institutions. This paper challenges that view through the transnational life of Lock Ah Tam (1872–1926), the first-ever influential Chinese seafaring labour contractor in Britain, known as the "King of Chinatown." A Cantonese peasant, he began as an ordinary seaman from Hong Kong and later became a traditional shipping master along various British coasts. After moving to Liverpool in 1908, he gradually pioneered the role of an official shipping agent—a chameleon navigating between institutions. On one hand, he appears in police records as an ally in monitoring and deporting Chinese seamen; on another, he became involved in drug trafficking and local merchant networks; furthermore, he collaborated with the emerging Kuomintang, becoming one of Britain's most renowned Chinese nationalist leaders. By complicating the labour contractor's role—traditionally placed in opposition to labour movements and marginalized in anti-racist agendas—this paper argues two points: first, the ideological boundaries between unionization and anti-racism were porous for Liverpool's Chinese seafaring community in the early 20th century; second, a nascent role of official shipping agent became a pivotal figure in nationalist-led political representation and an emergent political representative beyond grassroots organizations and prototypical unions for local Chinese.

'The genuine children of Limehouse Chinatown': voicing 'ordinariness' of interraciality in the early twentieth century Britain

Sha Zhou, University of Manchester

Current historiographical attention to the Chinese in Britain has focused mainly on the racialised experiences of the seamen community at UK dock areas in the early twentieth century but overlooked experiences of other sub-ethnic groups such as overseas students, intellectual exiles, as well as mixed race Chinese-Anglo children. Neither has it utilised fully oral sources to explore their own perspectives of everyday experiences. Taking on Caballero's (2019) using oral testimonies to challenge outsiders' traditional negative assumptions of interracial experiences, this paper centres voices of Anglo-Chinese children in Limehouse Chinatown in East London and examines their perceptions of living as racialised others. It broadens our understanding of the Chinese settlements in the early twentieth century Britain and reflects on the use of oral testimonies as historical sources.

'Read my case book, one page by one page': A Cantonese Gold Miner's Appeal from the Lunatic Asylum of Colonial Melbourne

Ge (Gigi) Tang, University College Dublin

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. I analyse how Jong's petition both aligns with and diverges from the more formally structured petitions submitted by Chinese elites or mediated by translators. While in some instances Jong adheres to the conventional format of the petition, at other times his deep distrust of the colonial legal and medical systems surfaces, disrupting the formal structure and tone of his appeal.

How State and Society in China Confronted South African Indenture

Nicholas McGee, Durham University

Following Britain's 1902 annexation of the Transvaal in South Africa, more than 64,000 indentured Chinese workers were brought to the country to labour gold mines between 1904-1910. In planning the scheme, mine agents and colonial officials anticipated minimal resistance to recruitment from Chinese society or from the Qing government, but quickly discovered this would not be the case. Already upon the arrival of their first investigatory mission in China in 1903, recruiters found themselves the target of a popular campaign against the scheme, originating with established Chinese migrants already in the Transvaal. As recruiting began in earnest the following year, posters denouncing the scheme sprung up in coastal cities, accounts of mistreatment appeared in Chinese newspapers, and mysterious letters of warning reached senior officials. In the meanwhile, the Qing state was facing crises of authority both at home and abroad with the overseas Chinese community, amongst whom exiled Chinese reformers and revolutionaries were already building coalitions for their alternative visions of a Chinese nation-state. Qing diplomats seized on Britain's desperation for the scheme's success in order to secure concessions, like the posting of a Qing consul in Johannesburg. These were much needed victories after years of frustrated efforts to gain reprieve from racist colonial Chinese exclusion laws. But amidst continued reports about the poor treatment of Chinese in South Africa, Chinese observers just as often blamed the Qing government for its failure to better protect its people. This paper explores the complex interplay between Chinese domestic and diasporic critics of Chinese indenture in the Transvaal, and the efforts of Qing officials to both capitalize on indenture and mitigate its exploitations.

B0206 Contemporary Digital Urban Life of China

'A Darkness Shimmering in the Light': Frontier Imaginaries, Urban Modernity, and Psychological Healing in the Contemporary Chinese Moving Image

Annabella Mei Massey, The Courtauld Institute of Art University of London

This paper explores how 'the frontier' has been reevaluated by contemporary Chinese artists as a psychologically reparative space which mediates the negative impact of urban modernity. Through an analysis of selected moving image artworks, which I contextualise against the predominantly geopolitical frontier discourse that has emerged in Chinese cultural production over the past decade (e.g. OCAT Shanghai's 2017 *Frontier [Jiangyu]* exhibition), I show how frontiers manifest as 'space[s] of desire' (Anna Tsing 2006: 32) for the urban psyche, enabling the protagonists of these works to transcend their malaise as they seek transformative encounters with the people and ecosystems at China's peripheries. In dialogue with recent scholarship which reexamines the human-frontier relationship, I focus on three films which depict this reparative frontier in response to mainland

China's post-1990s urbanisation programme: Xiaolu Guo's 2006 docufiction *How Is Your Fish Today?* (*Jintian de yu zenmeyang?*); Liu Yujia's 2023 gallery film *A Darkness Shimmering in the Light* (*Weiguang jian an*); and Cheng Xinhao's short 2024 gallery film *The Preludes* (*Qianzouqu*). From Guo's depiction of a human-centred frontier to the post-Anthropocentric visions we see in Liu and Cheng's works, this paper demonstrates how an alternate account of the frontier as an urban imaginary of rural escape has evolved across the twenty-first century.

Beyond Technologies of Care: Grassroots Negotiations of Smart Eldercare Initiatives in Urban China

Yuet Yan Katherine Wong, University of Oxford

Amid China's growing techno-nationalism, the government has increasingly embedded digital technologies into its eldercare system, aiming to enhance efficiency in care work and address the mounting challenges of an ageing population. State narratives and policy frameworks often depict elderlies as passive recipients of care, a perspective that is also reflected in much of the existing literature on smart eldercare initiatives. However, elderlies' engagements with these technologies are far more complex, shaping and reshaping the ethical possibilities of digital care itself. Drawing on 11 months of ethnographic fieldwork in urban Hangzhou, this study examines how China's smart eldercare initiatives are understood, contested, and negotiated by live-alone elderlies, family members, and local state actors. While some elderly individuals embrace these technologies as a long-overdue extension of state paternalism, others see them as an opportunity to actively partake in China's digital transformation. At the same time, experiences of unmet technological promises within a fragmented state apparatus have led some to dismiss these initiatives as mere "face work"—performative efforts rather than substantive solutions. By foregrounding elderlies as agentic actors, this study advances a situated approach to the ethical implications of technological shifts in care. It argues that the ethics of technology is not intrinsic to the device itself but emerges through moral aspirations, lived experiences, and configurations of care. Rather than imposing an ethical judgment on these technologies, this study positions them as a critical site of contestation, where abiding questions about ageing, care, responsibility, and the proper relationship among individuals, families, and the state are negotiated and continue to unfold.

Smart phones updating the conception of Chinese smart cities: geographic observation of an ultra-connected digital world-mobile-dependent smart-urbanism in Guiyang (Guizhou Province)

Vanessa Hammouche, University of Orléans

Huawei, Oppo, Vivo, OnePlus, Xiaomi, etc. The Chinese digital and phone industry shares a market between growth and degrowth, which has far outgrown the fundamentals of telephones (i.e., calling, communication, etc.). The place occupied by smartphones in local transportation brings a debate on the issue of technological dependence in China, its risks, and the limits of moving around. The multiplication of skills associated with it, such as mobile payment, electronic identification of transport tickets, and the GPS system, adds a dimensional (scalar) value to the originally practical question. This study testifies to a qualitative application in geography on a heterogeneous field between rurality and urbanity in the heart of "the poorest province in China" (Guizhou). A diachronic approach and a description of the evolution of urban practices expose a model of Chinese urbanism associated with the concepts of "mobility dematerialisation" and "smart urbanism." Hence, a question remains related to the social aspect and the consequences of "digital culture", as noted by sociologist Christophe Guibert and geographer Benjamin Taunay in 2018: "How does rural urbanisation in China transform both physical spaces, and does it structure then social space (differentiated social recruitment, reversal of secular economic structures (GUIBERT & TAUNAY, 2018). The hypothesis of an extending smart urbanism banishing the border between a physical, and an immaterial identity predominates in China, where even the "poorest" cities may have surpassed the status of smart cities. This is why, as an observation over two periods in the city of Guiyang, this communication evaluates how a tool of communication redefines the status of "smart cities".

B0207 Poetic Dialect, Anachronism, Calligraphy and Folk Religion [O]

Anachronism or the Sword of Damocles: The Revival of the Discourse of *Qiangang Duduan* in the Late Qing Constitutional Reform

Yutao Yao, Tohoku University

Anachronism in history raises complex questions about how past societies perceived and acted within categories that, in their own time, may have seemed outdated or misplaced. In Qing history, no anachronism is more prominent than the revival of the *Qiangang Duduan* discourse during the late Qing constitutional reforms (1905–1912), when the Qing Court sought to establish a constitutional monarchy aligned with its political tradition. *Qiangang Duduan*, meaning the emperor's exclusive decision-making power, was formalised as the Imperial Ancestors' Instruction during the High Qing period (1662–1795), shaped by reflections on the failures of past dynasties. However, from the 1860s, as immature emperors proved incapable of ruling independently, the Court deliberately downplayed this doctrine in favour of "govern together". By 1907, amid constitutional reforms, it was revived as a "sacred ancestral instruction" to counter proposals for responsible government, which were criticised as enabling the "absolutism of ministers" that had doomed previous dynasties. For decades, modernist and Marxist historians have framed the Qing's constitutional efforts as reactionary attempts to resist modernisation, portraying *Qiangang Duduan* as a last-ditch conservative effort. However, the emergence and re-emergence of political discourses in Qing China were deeply tied to the Court's legitimacy among the political elite in the eras of rapid transformation. Ignoring these discourses obscures the Court's initiative during this turbulent transition to constitutionalism. Adopting a dynastic historiographical approach, this research examines how *Qiangang Duduan*, with its historical weight and political significance, functioned as a "Sword of Damocles" in legitimising constitutionalism. It will analyse officials' memorials invoking *Qiangang Duduan* against indirect imperial rule in 1907 and internal debates on replacing the Grand Council with a Cabinet and Privy Council in 1911, contextualising their impact on the legitimising process of constitutional discourse in this reform.

Calligraphy's Turning Point: "Si Ti Shu Shi" and the Han-Jin Transition

Qianzhi Zhuang, Guangdong University of Technology

In the history of Chinese calligraphy, Wei Heng's (衛恒) "Si ti shu shi" (四體書勢 The Configuration of the Four Scripts), which was thought to be a landmark of the fundamental transition in Chinese calligraphy, defined what calligraphy really was by describing the configuration of calligraphy. Looking at the texts, "Si ti shu shi" reflected that calligraphy is still affiliated to the Confucian Classics (經學) and philology (文字學) during the Han and Jin periods. Meanwhile, the writing purpose, the writing objects, and the writing method of "Si ti shu shi" showed that calligraphy had gained its independence when nature had changed from the subjects of a metaphor to the vehicles of a metaphor. Looking at the historical context, the birth of "Si ti shu shi" implied the growth of personal status while the imperial authorities declined. Such trends were carried forward in the calligraphic treatises during Eastern Jin (317-420) and Southern Dynasties (420-589), resulting in the birth of man—the styles of man had established their dominant influence on the calligraphic styles. To sum up, "Si ti shu shi" indicated the fundamental turning point that when calligraphy was conceptualized and discussed by using the metaphor of nature figures and human features, calligraphy could separate itself from classical knowledge and then establish its independent status of art. It was in the establishment of man's subjectivity, and in the integration of man and calligraphy, that calligraphy established its artistic, individual, and stylized independent status.

Between State and Society: The Mediating Role of Folk Religion in Taiwan's Democratic Governance

Die Hu, Georg-August-University Göttingen

Taiwan's folk religion is deeply embedded in the island's social and political fabric, serving as a vital

bridge between grassroots communities and state institutions. This paper examines how folk religious practices, such as temple festivals, communal rituals, and spiritual networks, not only shape local identity but also influence political participation. By analysing historical case studies and contemporary political campaigns, this study reveals how politicians strategically engage with temple networks to build trust, mobilize voters, and solidify their legitimacy.

At its core, Taiwan's folk religion merges traditional Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist philosophies with modern democratic practices, creating an alternative political space that mitigates polarization and fosters community cohesion. Unlike populist movements that often position "the people" in opposition to elites, folk religion enables a model of governance where political leaders integrate into existing social structures rather than imposing authority from above.

By drawing from historical analysis, ethnographic observations, and political case studies, this research highlights how Taiwan's religious landscape sustains a unique form of civic engagement. It argues that folk religion offers an indigenous mechanism for political participation, one that harmonizes grassroots activism with state authority. More broadly, Taiwan's experience provides a compelling lens through which to explore how faith-based networks can reinforce democratic resilience, offering insights into alternative pathways for governance in pluralistic societies.

Poetic Dialect in Documentary Filmmaking from a Chinese Lens

Chen Chen, Auckland University of Technology

This presentation explores the pivotal role of dialect in shaping poetic imagery within Chinese documentary filmmaking. Using my own work, *Little Potato*, as a case study, I will illustrate how the Zhuji dialect, a sub-dialect of Wu Chinese spoken in my grandmother's hometown, contributes to the construction of poetic imagery. *Little Potato* is a poetic documentary about my grandmother, Shou Ai Xia, who has been living with dementia since 2012. This short documentary has its international premiere at the St. Louis International Film Festival 2024 and its national premiere at the Doc Edge Festival 2025, both of which are Oscar-qualifying film festivals. Through this film, I attempt to portray two interconnected worlds she inhabits. One rooted in fading memories of daily life and the other in the hallucinatory reality caused by her condition. The Zhuji dialect, with its rich history and unique poetic qualities, is central to this exploration. Dialect, as a form of "Xiang" [象], influences not only the auditory texture of the film but also helps to evoke emotional and philosophical responses to memory, loss, and identity. In this context, dialect functions as a powerful tool for bridging the past and present, allowing language and place to become inseparable from the emotional landscape of the documentary. As a practitioner, I explore the role of dialect in shaping poetic imagery in documentary filmmaking, with a particular focus on the filmmaking process, especially during editing. Thus, this paper will demonstrate how dialect plays a vital role in enriching the film's poetic qualities, helping to convey complex emotional experiences while preserving cultural and personal history.

B0208 China-Britain Exchange

'Signing the Unequal Treaty under Duress?' The Role of Chinese Minor Officials in the Treaty of Nanjing

Zicheng Zou, Fudan University

The Treaty of Nanjing in 1842 has long been remembered as the beginning of China's miserable modern era, in which a weak empire became increasingly manipulated by the British Empire and other Western powers. As a symbol of this fate, this first unequal treaty has been portrayed as a disgraceful unilateral agreement signed under duress, without any real negotiation. But what turned the British towards peace when further achievements seemed readily attainable at the final stage of the war? This article challenges conventional explanations by unearthing how a group of minor Chinese officials managed to win the trust of British officers, created an amicable atmosphere out of warfare, and hence paved the way for peacemaking to avoid further loss and worse bargaining position. The Opium War (1840–42) ended not by force alone, but also by establishing trust and

friendship, though hypocritically, before peace and treaty negotiation can be considered by the British Plenipotentiary Sir Henry Pottinger (1789–1856). By bringing to light hitherto unearthed local Chinese archives and the roles of several understudied minor Chinese officials, e.g. Huang Entong (1801–1883), Xu Jiahuai, Liu Tongying (?–1853), this article explains how these officials engaged with British officers and opened the path to treaty negotiation. It further demonstrates how Qing central archives fabricated authenticity in favour of high officials by excluding their subordinates' prohibited efforts to entertain and befriend 'barbarians'. While historians tend to project the 'century of humiliation' back onto the making of this first unequal treaty, this article argues that the treaty negotiation reflected the British Empire's desire to establish a mutually respectful and equal relationship with the Qing Empire for the first time in history—though Britain soon went far beyond this as history unfolded.

The Sound of the New British Natives: Ecocritical Recordings of *Rhododendron Ponticum* in Yan Wang Preston and Monty Adkins's *With Love. From an Invader*.

Alina Sinelnik, Durham University

With Love. From an Invader. (2020-2021) is a one-year-in-the-making moving-image work by Chinese British artist Yan Wang Preston and British composer Monty Adkins. Comprising photographs, videos and a soundscape, the work centres on a heart-shaped *rhododendron ponticum* in Burnley, Lancashire. *Rhododendron ponticum* plants have been first mass-imported to the UK from China, among other places, in the eighteenth century as part of the colonial fascination for the cultural "others". Yet today the plant is largely viewed as an invasive "alien". This reminded Wang Preston of her own uncomfortable position as a migrant in the UK in light of the heightened anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic. By zooming-in on the soundscape component of *With Love. From an Invader*, the paper argues that the work's intermedial aspect enables it to open a more critical and multidimensional dialogue on the history and present situation of the new natives in the UK – plant and human, Chinese and fellow migrants. As the paper shows, in the soundscape – that highlights and atmospherically mirrors the plant's visual documentation – this multidimensionality is reflected through the juxtaposition between recorded-first-hand environmental sounds and electronically generated sine tones that unsettle the natural sounds' peacefulness. This provokes the viewers to consider, among others, the colonial past behind the British *rhododendron ponticum* and its lingering presence today. Overall, by doubling the work's underlying message across the visual *and* sonic levels, Wang Preston and Adkins effectively convey the complexity of the *rhododendron ponticum* case in the UK. By inviting the viewers to delve into the phenomenology of seeing simultaneously with the phenomenology of listening, *With Love. From an Invader* creates an ambient immersive environment that compels to reconsider the historical attitudes towards Chinese plants and migrants, and the wider racially charged attitudes towards the new British natives in the post-Brexit and post-COVID UK.

The Politics of Reproduction: Touchpoints between Contemporary British and Chinese Women's Art

Yiqing Virginia Yang, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

The theme of reproduction has been at the core of feminist movements, particularly concerning women's human rights and bodily autonomy. In this paper, I focus on British and Chinese women's work: Lana Locke's *Untitled* (2006-2015) and Jiang Jie's *They Know Who They Are* (2007) with analysis that explores overlaps between them as part of a transcultural condition. These overlaps are defined as "touchpoints" – a way to capture transient, fluid or intra-secting moments where ideas within artworks meet. Two touchpoints emerge from a discussion that is informed by new materialist and phenomenological feminist methodology. First, the entanglement of organisms is central to both works. In this reading, human lived experience is not made up of isolated encounters with the world; rather, the world in its entangled intra-action is generative of human lived experience. Furthermore, this entanglement challenges the binaries inherent in self/others,

mind/body, and human/non-human. It opens up more possibility for all matter's being-in-the-world to intra-act. A second touchpoint is the politics of reproduction centred on women's bodies. The 'invisible' maternal body in these two artworks becomes a site of political action, as both British and Chinese governments make decisions regarding women's bodily rights in divergent ways. This study facilitates an in-depth analysis of women's art from a transcultural understanding and uncovers the inequalities inherent in gendered power relations.

Specimens or Fakes? Constructing Authenticity of Chinese paintings at the British Museum 1880 - 1910

Yitao Qian, SOAS University of London

It is a long-standing but often overlooked issue that many Chinese paintings collected by major British museums before the Second World War 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, assembled for his research at the Asiatic Society of Japan. 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 paintings from Olga-Julia Wegener, even as questions about their authenticity persisted. 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 historical, cultural, and perceptual values of Chinese painting in early British collections.

B0209 Gender in Focus: Exploring Gender in Chinese Literature and Translation

Rhetoricising and Poeticising Gender in English Translations of Cantonese Opera

Kelly (Kar Yue) Chan, Hong Kong Metropolitan University

Cantonese opera gained widespread popularity in Hong Kong from the 1930s to the 1980s. However, the translation of Cantonese opera into English occurred only infrequently and in a rather fragmented fashion from this period onwards. The small number of translators working in this area encounter challenges in managing huge differences in language, rhetoric, and culture. It is crucial to examine literary rhetoric and performance rhetoric in the gendered context when considering the intimate relationship between on-stage translation (i.e., surtitles) and the translation of read-only opera libretti. Also, the role of gender plays an important part in guiding translation strategies, which must capture various gendered rhetorical elements that convey vivid operatic effects. Under this principle, translators of Cantonese opera into English should be particularly attentive to the following issues: formats resembling classical Chinese poetry; cultural elements that subtly penetrate the lines; facets of the poetic structure of the lyrics; and literary and stylistic features pertaining to the representation of gender (given the unique practices of impersonation in Cantonese opera). In this regard, an analysis of how such gendered features should be rhetoricised and poeticised in the translation would help to reveal the subject.

Social Class and Gender: Representations of Baomu (Domestic Workers) in Contemporary Chinese Television

Yilin Gao, University of Essex

This presentation examines the representation of *baomu* (domestic workers) in contemporary Chinese television and how their portrayals reflect and reinforce gendered labour hierarchies and class inequalities in post-socialist China. Through a comparative analysis of representations of the *baomu* in the series *Mummy* (保姆, 2007), *The Nanny and the Security Guard* (保姆与保安, 2010) and *All Is Well* (都挺好, 2019), this study interrogates the depictions of such characters and their implications for public perceptions of gendered labour. Building on Erving Goffman's (1986) theory of stigma and Beverley Skeggs' (1997) work on the moral regulation of working-class femininity, this study explores how *baomu* occupy a paradoxical position within China's urban economy—simultaneously indispensable and socially marginalized. Media narratives frame domestic workers as either self-sacrificing caregivers or opportunistic intruders, reinforcing hegemonic gender and class structures. The analysis also considers how visual aesthetics—including framing, costume design, and spatial positioning—encode class and gender hierarchies. By situating *baomu* within domestic spaces while subjecting them to heightened scrutiny, these television narratives regulate working-class femininity and delineate social boundaries. Furthermore, while these portrayals primarily serve to maintain existing power asymmetries, they also expose moments of resistance and alternative narratives. By critically examining these media constructions, this presentation reveals how television narratives shape public perceptions of labour hierarchies while also uncovering subtle forms of resistance. In doing so, it contributes to broader discussions on precarious employment, gendered labour, and media discourse in contemporary China, highlighting the potential for more inclusive portrayals of domestic workers in popular media.

Contemporary Engagement and Gender Dynamics in Chinese Children's Literature in Post-One-Child Policy Era

Runyuan Bai, University of St Andrews

This article explores how Chinese children's literature production actively engages and mediates the nation's transition from the One-Child Policy (1979–2015) to a universal multi-child policy. Focusing on stories published before and after 2016, it finds that the contrast representation of expecting a second child in children's literature is framed by the birth control policy changes. This article emphasises the crucial role of children's literature as a medium of shaping collective understandings of gender roles, family norms, and social-political changes of the moment. Drawing on Bakhtin's *chronotope* theory and Adorno's culture industry framework, this study zooms in on a particular moment of children's literature production upon birth control changes in China. *Chronotope* analysis situates these stories for children and parents within specific temporal and social-political contexts, highlighting the tension and uneasiness upon the radical changes in birth-control policy changes. Meanwhile, Adorno's culture industry theory underscores how children's literature production, despite seemingly diversity and marketisation, systematically conveys ideological messages aligned with ideological objectives, illustrating the role of children's as both mirror and instrument of expected gender and family norms. Through comparative readings of children's literature books produced before and after 2016, by authors Qin Wenjun 秦文君 and Yang Hongying 杨红樱, this research identifies a significant shift: narratives prior to 2016 depict siblings negatively, reinforcing the One-Child Policy ideology by presenting second children as threats to family stability and resource distribution. In contrast, post-2016 literature actively reframes siblings positively, employing fantastical narratives to ease the one-child generation's anxieties over family investments, resources, and parental affection. These shifts in children's literature narratives mirror China's socio-political transformations and serve as critical mediators to help young readers negotiate new identities within evolving family structures. Therefore, this research contributes to broader academic discussions on the intersection between cultural production, demographic and societal-cultural transitions, and state policy in contemporary China.

Struggles of Modern Chinese Female Translators in Indirect Translation: A Case Study of Fengxian Nüshi and *Meirenszhou*

Mengjin Xue, University of York

The influx of Western and Japanese ideas significantly influenced China's transformation during the modern era. Chinese female translators, who experienced the collision between foreign and traditional Chinese gender norms, struggled to reconcile ideas of political revolution and feminist social reform in their works. This study explores these struggles through indirectly translated literary works between China, Japan, and the West in the early twentieth century, examining female translators' role in shaping societal discourse in modern China. This paper focuses on *Meirenszhou*, the Chinese translation of Fortuné du Boisgobey's *La main coupée* (1880). The novel was first translated into English as *The Lost Casket* (1881) and subsequently into Chinese via Japanese by Fengxian Nüshi (1903-1906). There is limited personal information about Fengxian Nüshi, and she was mentioned only by name in previous studies. In contrast to her outspokenness and radicalism toward political revolution, Fengxian Nüshi was relatively silent and conservative regarding feminist reform in her translation. While repeatedly advocating for a republican system and highlighting the people's lack of freedom under the Qing government's rule, she expressed her paradoxical feminist ideas. Although promoting free marriage and women's independence, Fengxian Nüshi argued that women's societal success relied on "beauty" and "affection" while belittling women's abilities and insights. By comparing this translation with the French source text, the English text, and the Japanese text, this paper discusses how Fengxian Nüshi used translation to express her complex ideas, employing strategies including omission, addition, and modification. This study situates her restrained views on gender emancipation within the broader historical context of modern China, shaped by traditional gender norms and emerging feminist ideas, analysing the female translators' struggles to reconcile different social expectations of women in the public and private spheres.

B0210 Governance, Performances and Representation

Re-examining the Performances of He Chengyao: The Affective and Material History of Women Artists in Post-Mao China

Wei Hao Gao, King's College London

He Chengyao (b. 1964) has been written into the canon of contemporary Chinese art in recent years. But most analysis of her work is focused on the political and economic inequality experienced by women artists and female bodies in post-Mao China (1978 to present). In this paper, I re-examine two of her most well-researched performances, *Mama and Me* (2001) and *99 Needles* (2001), to uncover the other forms of structural inequalities faced by women artists in post-Mao China and, more importantly, how the performance artworks by He help us to imagine ways to overcome them. This is achieved by through a visual analysis utilising theories and frameworks that have been under-research in contemporary Chinese art. First, I look at how Confucianism — specifically the ones related to familial norms — shaped the mother-daughter relationships and their individual subjectivities, including the subordinate positions that both women are forced to occupy. Relatedly, I look at how it resulted in the estrangement between the two. Second, and more importantly, I analyse how these performances allowed He to create an affective space that bridges the divide between mother and daughter. Additionally, I consider the divide that society imposes on most women: the separation between the youthful self and the aged other — both divisions stemming from the aforementioned inequalities.

An Exemplar Family of (Un)patriotism and (Dis)Loyalty: Generals of the Yang Family as a Critique of the Three Cardinal Bonds

Isaac Yue, University of Hong Kong

The legend of the Yang family first gained prominence through a number of popular plays in the late Yuan period, but it was not until the publication of two Ming novels — *Romance of the Yang Family* (楊家府演義 also known as *Generals of the Yang Family* 楊家將, henceforth referred to as *Yang*

Family) and *History of the Northern Song Period* (北宋志傳 henceforth referred to as *Northern Song*) – that its reputation as the epitome of the the three cardinal bonds (*sangang* 三綱) and the five constant virtues (*wuchang* 五常) was cemented. The permeation of this image of the family was aptly reflected in a 2019 special exhibition at the Prince Kung’s Palace Museum (恭王府) in Beijing, in which artworks and artifacts related to the Yang family were displayed across four chambers respectively titled “loyalty” 忠, “filial piety” 孝, “chastity” 節, and “righteousness” 義. But to what extent is it accurate? In this paper, I contend that the novel *Yang Family* in fact advocates an opposite ideology which portrays emperors as incompetent and susceptible to corruptions by treasonous ministers, fathers as prone to poor decisions, and husbands as irrelevant to what a woman is able to achieve. By re-reading this novel in the context of the three cardinal bonds, a case will be made regarding the novel’s reservation regarding the ideas of absolute loyalty, filial piety, and male authority, as well as their overall effectiveness as constituents of a harmonious society.

C0300 Love, Body and Gender

Moving Bodies, Training Hearts: Love and Intimacy in 1997's Youth Idol Dramas of Post-Socialist China

Quan Zhang, University of Reading

This presentation employs videographic criticism to delve into the nuanced ways in which embodiment serves as a conduit for intimacy and love in post-socialist China, focusing on two groundbreaking TV series from 1997 that initiated the "youth idol drama" genre: *Cherish Our Love Forever* (将爱情进行到底) and *Summer in Beijing* (北京夏天). By analysing the moving bodies legitimized in collective training sessions, performances, and working conditions, this study uncovers how these bodies become critical sites of emotional negotiation and cultural expression.

In this context, embodiment transcends mere representation, highlighting the intricate interplay between state-imposed discipline and burgeoning economic freedoms that shape personal relationships. The analysis reveals how these series illustrate not only the legitimization of intimacy but also the tension between emotional fulfilment and socio-economic realities, complicating the characters’ experiences of love. Through videographic criticism, I aim to capture the subtleties of these embodied experiences, illuminating how visual storytelling expresses complex emotions in a rapidly changing society. This exploration ultimately underscores the vital role of embodiment in understanding cultural narratives of love and intimacy, offering a fresh perspective on Chinese television studies.

C0301 Global China: Culture, Economy and Digital Dialogues

Navigating Polarization: Understanding Twitter's Dialogue on China in a Competitive Global Context

Wei-Feng Tzeng and Hsin-Hsien Wang, National Chengchi University

As the global competition between the US and China intensifies, the Chinese government has actively sought to enhance its online image to counter prevailing anti-China sentiment, prompting the question of whether this digital confrontation contributes to a polarized online public sphere. To explore this, we analysed over 400,000 Twitter posts from October 1 to December 18, 2022, containing keywords like “China” and “Xi Jinping.” Through machine learning techniques, we assessed the stance of more than 90,000 accounts, identifying 213 highly visible users and examining their positions on China and their retweet networks. Employing statistical analysis, we investigated how Twitter users' stances on China shifted following key political events. Contrary to the belief that internet anonymity fosters radicalism, our findings reveal that certain types of Twitter users tend to moderate their positions in response to significant events. This suggests that online discussions about China on Twitter are not as radically polarized as commonly perceived. Our study offers valuable insights into the dynamics of online public discourse surrounding China.

A Review of Hybrid Culture in Chinese Multinational: A Case Study of Lenovo.

Jingwen Jiang, University of Birmingham

This research is concerned with the organizational culture and global human resources strategy of Chinese multinational enterprises, and how these reflect the governmental context of their country of origin. In China, the political leadership has in recent years expanded its influence and control over the corporate sector. This topic is addressed via an in-depth case study of Lenovo, a company once seen to symbolise China's embrace of globalisation and now adapting to a different political context to that in which it was founded and expanded. Therefore, the research rationale is to assess how far did Lenovo move from its previous culture and strategy under to political pressure. The starting point of the research is the notion of hybridity, that competing values underly the development of Chinese multinationals such as Lenovo, between global and national, market and hierarchy, and proposes a theoretical framework in which a hybrid culture emerges through the interaction of competing principles. A hybrid perspective suggests that the image of Lenovo as a transnational organization derived from its high-profile acquisition of the IBM personal computer business, but that this was only one side of the Lenovo culture, the other being its role as a key supplier to the Chinese public sector. The results of the empirical study showed the evolving HR strategy of Lenovo goes as ambiguous and hybrid, on the one hand showing the extent to which State influence has rolled back the global or transnational principle that had once been seen as synonymous with Lenovo but also showing the extent to which elements of the earlier transnational or global culture remain. The research contributes to the dual identity of the Chinese corporate sector as the State's approach to globalisation changes.

What Enables the Action? The Capabilities Formation in Peripheral China's Path Creation

Hao Chen, University of Glasgow

The development of new industries in peripheral regions has gained renewed attention recently. Recent contributions in economic geography from the anchoring and mobilisation perspective brings new insights for understanding how new and emerging industries are created and development in peripheral regions. Yet, what actors, and how their capabilities of anchoring and mobilising external resources are formed in the process of the development of new industries in peripheral regions, have not been sufficiently explored. Based on an in-depth case study of the development of strategic emerging industries in Hefei, China, the article explores in depth the actors and how they develop their capabilities, and how those capabilities are institutionalized and transferred into anchoring and mobilisation actions that allow peripheral regions to "catch up" or make long jumps in the product space. This paper shows that the strategic formation and institutionalisation of agency on anchoring and mobilizing external assets among local actors—particularly the place-based leader—is key to the development of new industries in peripheral regions. In this way, peripheral regions can reduce the randomness inherent in the industrial path creation and substantially mitigate the risk of falling back into peripheral status because of the path exhaustion.

From Canton to Leith: Scottish Tea Merchants and the Globalisation of Sino-British Trade (1845–1855)

Huirong Cheng, University of Edinburgh

This paper examines the role of Scottish tea merchants in shaping the Sino-British tea trade and its broader impact on China's economic transformation during the mid-nineteenth century. Through a case study of the correspondence of William Melrose (1817–1863), this research explores how Scottish traders engaged with Chinese commercial networks, adapted to shifting trade policies, and contributed to the expansion of global tea markets from China to Britain. Melrose's letters provide crucial insights into the procurement, transportation, and sale of Chinese tea, revealing the operational complexities and commercial strategies employed within the Qing economy. Unlike dominant British firms such as Jardine Matheson & Co., Scottish merchants, operating within the newly established treaty port system, formed strategic partnerships with Chinese Hong Merchants to navigate China's evolving trade regulations. This paper investigates how these transnational

business relationships shaped trade negotiations, credit systems, and risk management in the wake of the First Opium War (1840) and the Treaty of Nanking (1842), which fundamentally altered China's trade infrastructure. By analysing the financial mechanisms underpinning the tea trade, this study highlights the ways in which Scottish merchants interacted with Chinese markets, responded to shifts in local supply chains, and negotiated currency exchanges within the Qing commercial framework. Furthermore, this research examines how the growing demand for Chinese tea in Britain reinforced structural changes in China's regional economies, particularly in tea-producing areas such as Fujian and Jiangxi. Situating Scottish tea merchants within a broader framework of Chinese economic history, this paper argues that their commercial activities not only connected China to global markets but also played a role in reshaping local trade dynamics and financial institutions. Drawing on Chinese and Scottish primary sources, this study integrates business history with material culture analysis to offer a deeper understanding of the economic forces that redefined Sino-British trade relations in the nineteenth century.

C0302 Gendered Issues: Ageing, Body and Sexual Identity

Chinese male stardom and cosmetics: the male body, masculinities, and the postfeminist culture in China.

Yixuan Feng, Independent Scholar

The article examines contemporary Chinese masculinities in a postfeminist culture by looking at Chinese male stars and their endorsement of, and more broadly association with, cosmetic products, an arena which conventionally pertains to female stars and is indicative of feminine practices. It moves beyond an economic perspective, where male stars' endorsement of skincare and makeup are often considered a business gimmick which capitalises on their star power and sexual appeal to female consumers and fans. Instead, it focuses on how such practices offer a productive site for understanding Chinese maleness and masculinities in contemporary times. Drawing on examples of male stars' promotion of cosmetic products (makeup in particular), the article investigates how postfeminism 'as a distinctive kind of gendered neoliberalism' (Gill, 2017) has informed the way in which maleness and masculinities are understood and scrutinised in the context of contemporary China. In demonstrating how male stars' cosmetic endorsement presents both tension, negotiation and reconciliation between the male body, feminisation, and the male ideal, the article highlights how contemporary Chinese masculinities are structured by the complex interplay of gender, neoliberalism, and transnationalism. It concludes by suggesting first, an increasingly homogenised perception of ideal masculinity in China and a representation of male body in tandem with postfeminist discourses, and second, how a consumerist culture might contribute to the gravitation toward a 'masculinity premium' that transcends the gendered power structure and encroaches on diverse articulations of masculinity.

Gendering Dongbei: Ageing Masculinities and Northeast China in *The Long Season*

Min Xu, Durham University

While the representation of Chinese masculinities in film and media has received increasing scholarly attention, little has been said about the images of ageing men, even though China is currently facing an ageing population. This paper examines the depictions of elderly men in Northeast China (Dongbei) in the crime-comedy streaming series *The Long Season* 漫长的季节 (2023), and how these gendered images express uncertainties about the neoliberal ethos of individuality and productivity in recent China. Once the industrial hub in Maoist China, Dongbei witnessed the large-scale shutdown of state-owned factories that led to the dismissal of millions of workers in the late 1990s. Since then, Dongbei has been stigmatised as the outcast of the market economy. By engaging with studies on ageing masculinity, humour, and Dongbei, I will offer a contextualised analysis of the series' portrayals of ageing male bodies and fatherhood in later life. First, I will investigate how the series comically foregrounds the overweighted, deteriorating, or disabled bodies of older male laid-off workers, thereby challenging the perceptions of successful ageing while evoking sympathy. I

argue that such representations of ageing masculinity renegotiate the negative imagery of Northeastern workers as unproductive and overdependent on state welfare. Second, I will explore how the narrative of a working-class father giving up patriarch dominance as he grows old intertwines with that of China's marketisation, so that a non-hegemonic ageing fatherhood is mobilised to conform to the grand narrative of privatisation as liberating human nature and granting individual happiness. This paper suggests that the Northeastern elderly male image brings insights into the shifting, self-contradictory perceptions of selfhood, independency, and productivity in recent China.

Managing Bleeding: Menstruation and Women's Regulated Bodies in 20th Century China

Ruoyu Jia, Durham University

Throughout Chinese history, menstruation has been largely absent from social, cultural, and political discourse but gradually became a public topic in the 20th century. This study traces Chinese women's menstruation experiences and how the state, society, and women themselves managed their bleeding bodies in this turbulent century from the perspective of the history of gender, culture and science. Benefiting from archival research and existing and new oral history sources, it explores how social norms regarding menstruation changed during this time, how scientific menstrual knowledge shaped women's ideas of hygienic modernity and their social status, and how women were politically and materially managed during their periods. Modern physiological education since the Republican era shifted menstruation away from traditional taboos but still portrayed menstruating women as vulnerable and unstable, emphasising the need for menstrual management. Disposable sanitary napkins, marketed as hygienic and modern, briefly appeared in 1920s China, which encouraged women to pursue self-management, self-empowerment and the image of 'New Women'. In the early Socialist period, labour protection policies treated menstruation as a national issue, making women's menstrual cycles a public concern for labour regulation. However, propaganda promoting the 'Iron Girls' ideal expected women to work as if they were not menstruating. The lack of menstrual products further complicated this paradox between state control and self-management. After the 1980s, menstrual technologies offered Chinese women a well-managed period again. However, they also push women into consumerism and make menstruation a more invisible topic. This study, using a historical and interdisciplinary approach, highlights how menstruation became a site of regulating bodies and evolving conceptions of femininity in 20th-century China, arguing that mass knowledge, state policies, and menstrual technologies have positioned women as objects of management rather than empowering them to be in charge of their own bleeding bodies.

Subtext and Subculture in Chinese Lesbian Fandom: Negotiating Identity Between Mainstream Media and Baihe Communities

Ziyi Wang, University of Sheffield

In contemporary Chinese media, female same-sex representation is often confined to subtext due to censorship, compelling lesbian audiences to seek both limited mainstream visibility and alternative subcultural arenas. At the same time, a niche *baihe* ("girls' love") subculture flourish online, offering distinct narratives that centre female-female desire and belonging for community engagement. This study examines how Chinese lesbian fans simultaneously navigate and negotiate these two arenas—mainstream implicit portrayals and subcultural *baihe* texts—to construct and affirm their identities. While *danmei* ("boys' love") fandom, largely composed of heterosexual women, has been extensively studied in Sinophone media research, the distinct context of *baihe* fandom remains critically understudied. *Baihe* fans—predominantly lesbian—consume and interpret female-female narratives through a lens of personal identification and affective meaning. Drawing on queer media studies and affect theory, this study fills a crucial gap by analyzing how lesbian fans use *baihe* as both an emotional refuge and a site of negotiation with the constraints of mainstream media. Based on semi-structured interviews with Chinese lesbian fans and textual analysis of key media texts

(*Dear Missy* (2020), *Couple of Mirrors* (2021), and selected *baihe* web novels), this study reveals a dual process at play: *baihe* fans strategically engage with subtext-laden mainstream texts for visibility while simultaneously turning to subcultural spaces for autonomy and self-representation. This engagement evokes deeply ambivalent emotions, marked by both frustration with censorship and continued affective investment in their desire for visibility. These findings illustrate the precarious positioning of lesbian audiences in contemporary Chinese media, revealing how lesbian audiences navigate mainstream marginality and find affirmation in *baihe* subculture. Ultimately, this research broadens understandings of queer visibility, censorship, and cultural production, offering new insights into how marginalized fans carve out space for recognition under restrictive conditions.

C0303 Social Media, Community Building and National Security

Network of Necessity: Social Media, and Community Resilience in Shanghai's 2022 Lockdown

Yiling Wang, University of Edinburgh

Amid the 2022 Shanghai COVID-19 lockdown, which received extensive international media coverage, social media emerged as a vital channel for civic engagement, resource sharing, and collective action during an unprecedented city-wide crisis. Although it drew some academic attention, the local dynamics of how residents harnessed digital communication for grassroots crisis response remain underexplored. This study examines the role of platforms like Weibo and WeChat in driving grassroots responses, revealing how they shaped community resilience and surveillance practices during a critical public health policy juncture in China's most modern metropolis. Understanding these dynamics clarifies the possibilities and limits of digital civic engagement in authoritarian contexts, with implications for governance and policymaking. A qualitative, multi-method design was employed, including semi-structured interviews with residents in three Shanghai subdistricts to capture firsthand experiences of platform use. These were complemented by content and discourse analysis of social media posts, documents, and official statements, uncovering patterns of communication and interactions between citizens and local authorities. The theoretical framework integrates civic engagement, crisis communication, and the Social Amplification of Risk Framework (SARF) to demonstrate how online collaboration and censorship concurrently enable and constrain community resilience. Preliminary findings reveal a complex interplay between community-driven initiatives—such as online mutual aid and neighbourhood group buying—and the tightly enforced yet overstretched local administration. This interaction cultivates evolving patterns of collective risk assessment, fostering community solidarity and friction, as well as dissent. Conceptualising social media as both a tool for collective empowerment and a site of regulatory control, this study provides a nuanced analysis of the shifting boundaries between engagement and compliance, elucidating the potentials and constraints of bottom-up crisis response in Chinese urban settings. This research highlights the unique cultural and political specifics that shape civic participation in Chinese cities.

Negotiating Visibility: Chinese Female Influencers' Self-Presentation Strategies in the MCN-Dominated Douyin Ecosystem

Danni Tang, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

The rise of social media has reshaped self-presentation as a performative and strategic practice, particularly for influencers navigating digital labor and platformised visibility. Douyin, as China's dominant short-video platform, presents a unique case where female influencers construct and negotiate their online personas under algorithmic governance, audience expectations, and commercial imperatives. This study examines their self-presentation strategies through the lens of Goffman's self-presentation theory, Bourdieu's concept of celebrity capital, analysing how influencers balance authenticity with aspirational branding to maximize engagement and sustain digital fame. This research employs a two-stage qualitative approach. First, a content analysis of selected Douyin female influencer accounts identifies patterns in visual aesthetics, narrative framing, and engagement strategies, revealing how influencers perform identity work in response to platform

affordances. Building on these insights, semi-structured interviews with female influencers further explore the tensions between self-branding, algorithmic visibility, and platform monetization. By integrating these methods, the study illuminates how platform structures, MCN (Multi-Channel Network) involvement, and gendered labour dynamics shape influencers' self-presentation strategies. By situating influencers within the broader discourse of digital celebrity, gendered digital labour, and platform capitalism, this study highlights that self-presentation is not merely an individual act but a negotiated process shaped by technological, economic, and social forces. It offers a critical perspective on how Chinese female influencers cultivate and sustain celebrity capital in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Strategic Adaptation in the Digital Age: The Symbiotic Relationship Between State Control and We-media in China

Cong Nie, University of Sheffield

This study examines the paradox of We-media's (Self-media, or *Zi Meiti*) growth in China despite increased state control, focusing on how We-media practitioners navigate ambiguous and restrictive guidelines imposed by the Chinese government. Using a political economy lens, I introduce the Strategic Diversification (SD) Model to explain how We-media practitioners adjust content creation and monetisation strategies to align with state goals while maximising profitability. In a dialectical relationship with state power, content creators employ sub-channel accounts, platform diversification, and content-washing tactics to exploit gaps in regulatory frameworks, attracting sizeable audiences while avoiding censorship. Rather than challenging the state, these adaptive strategies enable We-media to reinforce the government's broader goals of economic growth and social stability. This study challenges the binary framing of state control versus media commercialisation, revealing a symbiotic relationship where We-media aligns with the Chinese state's objectives under Xi Jinping's administration in digital China. Findings from this research contribute to a nuanced understanding of digital media's role under authoritarian governance and broaden perspectives on state-media dynamics in a commercially driven yet politically controlled landscape.

'Xueba Couples': Meritocratic Romance and the Politics of Soft Paternalistic Model-Making Propaganda in China

Shidai Zhang, University of Cambridge

Chen Li, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

In recent years, China's party-state has propagated online a sea of love stories featuring college student couples with both exceptional academic performance and political credentials as the so-called 'Xueba Couples'. Based on qualitative text analysis and complementary fieldworks, this article argues that such an official storytelling of 'meritocratic romance' constitutes a soft paternalistic propaganda campaign to the Chinese university-educated youths, now often caught between 'lying-flat-ism' and an 'intimacy crisis' amidst rapid economic and socio-demographic changes. It shows that the party-state's 'thought and political works' to the youths have been extended over life politics, while signifying the continuing relevance of Confucian cultural and Maoist revolutionary legacies in model-making tactics for propaganda and social management, albeit under President Xi Jinping's new slogan of 'positive energy' and through new digital intermediaries nurtured by the media convergence reforms. While an active online viewership market exists for meritocratic romance, an analysis of audience responses indicates that the persuasive power of official 'Xueba Couples' narratives has been compromised by elitism and state paternalism intrinsic to the model-making formula.

C0304 Identity in Diaspora and Cultural Heritage

British Chinese Life Writing: Individuality, Collectivity, and Pluralised Diasporic Chinese Identity

Shenghao Hu, Queen Mary University of London

This paper examines contemporary British Chinese life writing, with a particular focus on Xiaolu Guo's and Tash Aw's works. I argue that while life writing generally focuses on personal narratives, it also delves into the interaction between the individual and the collective. This study intends to answer the following core questions: how do British Chinese writers' personal and collective memories translate into their literary creation? How do they navigate the tension between individuality and collective affiliation? How do they contribute to diversifying diasporic Chinese identity? While the Western readership typically engage in an ethnographical reading of autobiographies and memoirs by ethnic minority writers, both Guo and Aw integrate fictionality into their narratives to assert their narratorial subjectivity, thereby bridging gaps in memory and processing traumatic experiences. While emphasising individual subjectivity, the essay argues that both writers simultaneously reaffirm their attachment to a broader collective identity. The tension between individuality and collectivity remains a challenge for British Chinese writers, and due to its negotiation between the two dimensions, life writing contributes to the pluralisation of diasporic Chinese identity.

Kang Youwei's forgotten American colony
Hugo Wong, Independent Scholar

From the 1880s, rejected by the USA, many early Chinese migrants settled in Mexico instead. At first, Mexico welcomed them. By the start of the century, more than 60,000 Chinese had entered the country, mostly via the USA. In Mexico, those migrants enjoyed freedoms never experienced before. Because of that unique set of circumstances and using their transnational trading networks, Chinese migrants prospered in unprecedented ways, building a monopoly over the grocery trade in the country's north, just across the US border. Unlike in the US earlier, the Chinese were able to assimilate into Mexican society, mixing with local women and blending their traditions. From the early 1900s, the migrants founded a Chinese colony in the city of Torreon, which would become their most prosperous in America, never before a group of Chinese exercising such power over a Western population. The colony was built by Kang Youwei, then a political dissident in exile, who invested millions of dollars in capital from its diasporic political movement around the world. This Chinese colony had a bank, a newspaper, a school, farms, hotels, and even a tramway company, a first example of Chinese-owned infrastructure abroad. Kang dreamed that his new colony in Mexico, already a mixed-race country, would be the place his vision of a unified world would become reality. Many Chinese diplomats encouraged its diaspora to settle in South America too. Relationships between Chinese and locals were complex, and at times exploitative. In 1911, the Mexican revolution shattered this dream of multiculturalism, destroying the Torreon colony. In less than 2 days, 305 Chinese were murdered, their largest massacre in American history. Further massacres would follow, ending in mass expulsions two decades later. By the start of WW2, of those 60,000 Chinese, only 5,000 remained.

The Sustainability of Intangible Cultural Heritage in China: The Case of Taohuawu Woodblock Prints

Zihao Wang, University of Leeds

This ethnographic case study explores pathways to sustainability for China's Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) across four dimensions: culture, economy, society, and environment. Focusing on the Taohuawu woodblock print tradition—a national ICH recognized in 2006—this research addresses two central questions: What are the key factors affecting the sustainability of ICH in China? And how can sustainability be achieved in the four dimensions mentioned above? By emphasizing community participation and bottom-up approaches, the study highlights the critical roles of grassroots perspectives and individual institutions in preserving and revitalizing ICH. The findings aim to fill a theoretical gap in the study of ICH sustainability in China, offering practical insights for policymakers, cultural practitioners, and local communities.

Cultural Heritage and Technical Milestone: The Global Success of *Black Myth: Wukong*

Maggie Li, University for the Creative Arts

Video games based on the classic Chinese novel *Journey to the West* have always been a popular theme in the Chinese game market, it is not surprising that the first AAA game in China is also based on this novel. *Black Myth: Wukong* (2024), developed by Game Science, gained worldwide attention upon its release and has become a milestone for the development of the Chinese gaming industry. Unlike traditional adaptations, the game embraces cryptic storytelling and provides a continuation of the original story. It introduces players to a rich mythological world filled with supernatural beings, Taoist philosophies, and Buddhist themes, offering an experience distinct from the European medieval or Japanese samurai settings commonly seen in AAA games. Key factors in the game's global recognition are its technical prowess and artistic innovation. The game aesthetics blend realism with traditional Chinese art. Powered by Unreal Engine 5, the game's visual presentation features stunning ray-traced environments, fluid animations, and sophisticated creature designs inspired by Chinese folklore. The gameplay of *Black Myth: Wukong* also contributes to its international appeal, with its *Soulslike* combat system, popularized by games such as *Dark Souls* (2011) further enhancing its global appeal. This paper explores the reasons behind the game's success in the international markets, focusing on its cultural appeal, technical excellence, gameplay innovations, and strategic global marketing to examine its significance and impact on the Chinese gaming industry.

C0305 Gender and Feminism: Representation and Decision

Cross-Gender Performance in Chinese Opera: Theatricality, Conventionalization, and Codified Aesthetics

Bette Zhaoyi Yan, University of Oxford

This paper investigates the codified aesthetic system underlying cross-gender performance in Chinese opera, a practice that transcends historical origins to remain a cornerstone of the art form. While existing literature highlights the historical development and the performative techniques of Chinese opera, less attention has been given to its systematic theatricality—rooted in conventionalization, abstraction, and codification—that enables cross-gender roles to thrive. Drawing on insights from performance studies, semiotics, and cultural anthropology, this study addresses this gap by exploring how these elements create a shared "contractual" language between performers and audiences. The research is grounded in extensive fieldwork across 11 cities in Mainland China, including participant observation and in-depth interviews with 49 practitioners and audience members in 2023 to 2024. These findings illuminate the layered codification within Chinese opera, spanning the personal connections between performers and their roles, interactions among co-performers, and the dynamic performer-audience relationship. By contextualizing these practices within broader theoretical frameworks—such as Brecht's alienation effect, Schechner's performativity and Saussure's semiology—this paper examines how cross-gender performance blurs boundaries between gender, reality, and imagination. This analysis offers new perspectives on the sustainability of Chinese opera in contemporary society, also emphasizing the need for audience education and cultural appreciation. By situating Chinese opera within both its historical roots and current challenges, this paper contributes to discussions on global performance traditions, aesthetic systems, and the interplay between traditional art forms and modernity.

Gendered Phenomenon of Remigration Choice: A Case from China's Internal Migration

Luping Wang, University of York

The gendered perspective examines how gender relations shape migration outcomes and are reproduced throughout the migration process (Donato et al., 2006; Nawyn, 2010; Kimmel, Hearn & Connell, 2004), which are embedded in interactions and structures within family, communities, workplace and public sphere (Hongdagneu-Sotelo, 2003, 2011, 2015; Sassen, 2002). The high living costs and hukou-based barriers in first-tier cities often make migrants' stay temporary, as they may

choose to remigrate at some point—a process that is highly gendered. Existing research on internal and return migration has thoroughly elaborated on women’s relative disadvantages in the labour market and how caregiving expectations shape their remigration decisions (Curran & Saguy, 2001; Haddad & Caron, 2023; Zhang, 2013; Guo, Chow & Palinkas, 2011; Zhang, Nazroo & Zhang, 2023). However, there is a lack of in-depth analysis and theoretical exploration regarding the opportunities available to female migrants, the differentiated remigration expectations and trajectories of male and female migrants, and the mechanisms through which the hukou system shapes gendered remigration in China’s context. Based on interviews with 28 migrant and 7 native respondents in Shanghai, this study examines how gendered roles and expectations shape migrants’ remigration decisions in interaction with the hukou system. While caregiving expectations influence women’s choices, they do not necessarily lead to higher return rates. Instead, urban culture, reliance on partners as primary providers, and aspirations to marry locals for hukou benefits foster more positive settlement expectations. Even when remigrating, women may tend to relocate to nearby areas rather than returning home, unlike their male counterparts. This study highlights remigration pathways among female migrants, particularly urban peripheral relocation as an adaptation strategy. It also reveals how the hukou system interacts with gender norms, shaping migration trajectories through both institutional constraints and marriage market dynamics.

Beyond the Human: Daoism, Ecofeminism and Cross-Species Co-Creation in Multimedia Art
Jiatong Han, University of Glasgow

This research integrates ecofeminism and classical Daoist philosophy to explore the expression of non-human agency in multimedia art. Ecofeminism critiques anthropocentrism and emphasizes the interdependence between human and non-human entities. At the same time, Daoism offers a non-dualistic, fluid, and balanced worldview that provides a philosophical foundation for understanding non-human intelligence. Using the Five Elements (Water, Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal) as a framework, the study begins with Water to propose a model of non-human wisdom, examining how non-human actors can become co-creators in art. Through experimental video and AI technologies, it investigates how water's flow disrupts linear narratives, how plant bio-signals generate visual rhythms, how fire's heat shapes temporal dynamics, how soil embodies memory, and how metal's conductivity and data retention reveal sensory potential. This study aims to establish a decentralized creative methodology, positioning non-human forces as central agents in narrative construction and challenging traditional human-centred authorship in art.

C0306 Chinese Citizenship in the New Era [P]

This panel features five research presentations that investigate diverse yet interconnected aspects of Chinese citizenship in the Xi Jinping’s New Era. Topics include the Confucian citizen, political discourse, strategic narratives, gendered citizenship, and education as a tool for fostering civic engagement. Together, these presentations provide multifaceted insights into citizenship within China’s evolving sociopolitical landscape in the New Era, encouraging intellectual exchange and enhancing our understanding of how citizens navigate their identities, roles, and rights.

The Emergence of Confucian-Civic Discourse: Exploring Strategies for Rationalising Civic Actions among Confucian Education Activists in Contemporary China

Canglong Wang, University of Brighton

This article examines how Confucian educators in contemporary China utilize both civic and non-civic (Confucian) narratives to legitimize their educational activities. The key research questions include: How do Confucian educators rearticulate their engagement in the alternative education of Confucianism outside the formal state education system, especially amid increasingly stringent regulations on non-state, grassroots education? How do they seek to rationalize and secure safe spaces for the development of Confucian education, which diverges from—and at times conflicts with—state-mandated compulsory education? What changes, adaptations, or adjustments have

they made in their discourse and practices to accommodate state oversight? Drawing on materials collected from 2022 to 2024, the study analyses data from 31 Confucian education practitioners, including school founders, teachers, parents, and adult students. Using critical discourse analysis, this study reveals three key findings. First, despite intensified state control over civil society under Xi Jinping since 2012, civic concepts like rights and responsibilities continue to feature in the discourse of Confucian educators. However, these actors tend to reinterpret civic terms through Confucian doctrine, imbuing them with Confucian values. Second, Confucian concepts and ideas are widely employed in their narratives, yet are often infused—consciously or unconsciously—with modern civic meanings to justify their educational initiatives. This approach subtly challenges state education by exposing its limitations and proposing alternative educational models. Third, Confucian educators actively adopt a state-endorsed narrative that promotes support for "excellent Chinese traditional culture." However, this alignment with state rhetoric often clashes with practical educational policies and regulations, which tend to categorize grassroots Confucian education as a violation of the *Compulsory Education Law* and a potential threat to the state-dominated education system. This article argues that civic discourse in the revitalized Confucian education field is undergoing a complex transformation marked by alignment in some areas and contradiction in others between Confucian ideals and the socialist state. Under intensified regulation of civic discourse and action, the articulation of Confucian-civic discourse highlights both new possibilities and inherent limitations in the reconfiguration of civic language in China.

The “Speechlessness” of Successful Players in Social Struggles: An Exploration of Two Suspended Civil Rights-Related Legal Drafts and Their Associated Gaming Process

Weinan Wang, University of Kent

Since the concept of citizenship was introduced to mainland China at the end of the last century, there have been many translations (Guo, 2009). This cultural phenomenon reflects not only the Chinese intellectual community’s various understandings of “citizenship” but also a social reality deeply rooted in China’s political and cultural tradition: around the “referent” of that linguistic symbol, different subjects may have very different ways of constructing discourse. In the Chinese context, using technical language rather than a language of rights to deal with political issues is a governance tradition. This tradition has a dual effect: it leaves room for game playing while isolating the political game between players within a limited scope. Correspondingly, in the increasingly tight space for political expression, individuals often consciously design “strategies” to achieve better game results, choosing official discourses to carry out resistance and thereby retaining the possibility of “dialogue”. This approach also has a dual effect: on the one hand, it is possible to achieve a certain degree of effective game-playing and, on the other, it causes a phenomenon which I refer to here as “speechlessness.” “Speechlessness” includes not only tangible phenomena—such as opinion leaders being “banned”—but also “grammatical dependence,” which, for instance, prevents the expression of general rights due to a reliance on the official discourse or exclusion from the game even if they are expressed. A lack of awareness of the latter often causes the disintegration of fragile resistance alliances between victims and opinion leaders after technical problems are solved, making it difficult to further coordinate the agenda of how to promote demands regarding rights (Zhang & Wang, 2023). The *Regulations on the Management of Social Organizations* and the *National Public Service Management Measures for Online Identity Authentication* are two legal drafts related to “citizen rights”. They relate to freedom of association and freedom of speech (online). In the view of the “party-state,” these are primarily technical public service issues involving the qualification of social organizations and online identity authentication. Although the two drafts are at different levels of legislative effect, they have both been included in the legislative agenda and successfully reached the public consultation stage. They have both been shelved due to strong opposition from the public. However, with “grammatical dependency” and “tangible” speechlessness, the experiences of opinion leaders in the two events are quite different. This article will take the processes of the resistance against these two documents as case studies, and, using a multi-case

similarity-difference matrix as an analytical framework, it will draw on discourse analysis and event review to restore the game process. It will examine the different perspectives and methods of discourse construction used by individuals and the party-state on citizens' rights in the Chinese context. It will explore the strategic choices, and consequences thereof, of individuals fighting for their rights, and then finally use a comparison of these two cases to attempt to draw what may be generalizable of the phenomenon of "speechlessness" in citizen practice and social struggle in the Xi era.

Strategic Narratives and the Linguistic Dilemma of Citizenship in China: State-Controlled Discourse and Citizen Identity after 2012

Yang Li, Ghent University

Since Xi Jinping took office in 2012, Chinese citizenship has encountered a 'linguistic dilemma': while direct references to citizenship have been increasingly restricted, civic practices and social identity have persisted. This phenomenon can be understood through the lens of strategic narrative theory, which suggests that the state uses controlled narratives to shape citizenship in ways that promote political stability and social control. The central research question of this study is: how does the Chinese government's strategic narrative influence citizenship identity and practices under Xi Jinping? This article employs strategic narrative theory as an analytical framework to explore its role in the linguistic dilemma of Chinese citizenship. By controlling civic discourse, the state constructs a 'collective' identity aligned with China's national interests. The article first traces the evolution of citizenship within Chinese state narratives, particularly during the Xi Jinping era, when 'civil society' became a sensitive and often avoided topic in academic and public discourse. For instance, the promotion of 'core socialist values' demonstrates how the rights-based aspects of citizenship have been diminished while collective responsibility and obligation have been emphasised, creating a narrative framework that reinforces nationalism and state centrality. These narratives are systematically disseminated through official media, policy documents, and educational content, shaping a model of citizenship that aligns with government expectations. The study then examines how citizens use creative strategies within this restrictive linguistic environment such as metaphors, homophones, and symbols to express social demands and identities. This linguistic predicament forces citizens to find alternative forms of expression outside of official discourse, thus generating an 'unofficial civic language'. Using qualitative content analysis, this study investigates how the Chinese government shapes citizens' perceptions of citizenship through strategic narratives and explores how citizens respond within constrained environments. By purposively sampling and analysing official media, policy documents, and social media content, the research reveals the interaction between state-imposed narratives and citizen counter-narratives. The findings indicate that despite the state's attempts to downplay individual rights by emphasising 'responsibility' and 'collective interests', citizens continue to seek implicit linguistic spaces to assert personal and group rights. This dynamic interaction between state control and citizen resistance highlights that citizenship practices are not static, as citizens innovate with linguistic expressions even in restricted environments. This research is significant because it explores how China's national discourse reshapes and restricts citizenship from a strategic narrative perspective. It provides a framework for analysing the evolving nature of citizenship in highly controlled political environments, enriching theoretical perspectives on Chinese citizenship. Moreover, the study offers practical insights into the complex relationship between political control and social identity in China, with implications for future studies on how citizenship is constructed and constrained in other authoritarian regimes.

Gendered Citizenship in China: Investigating Chinese Young Women's Identities from Urban Area of China

Siqi Zhang, University of Strathclyde

Influenced by China's one child policy, Chinese urban daughters have benefited from the demographic pattern. Singleton daughters enjoy great parental support due to the fact that they do

not have to compete with brothers for parental investment (Fong, 2002). It is more likely for this group of Chinese young women to travel overseas and getting more ideas from a cosmopolitan 'cultural supermarket' made available through the internet as well as new media (Mathews 2000). Gendered citizenship can be conceptualised as differential relationship between the state and citizens based on gender, which can lead to unequal citizenship rights. A gender perspective on citizenship suggests that men and women have the equal right in societies, which should be enshrined in laws as well as legal processes. In exploring gendered citizenship in China, the focus of this research is how they imagine and articulate their contribution to their local contexts (Nakano, 2014). This research will adopt qualitative methodology especially systematic review to collect data. This research will primarily introduce how gendered citizenship is conceptualised in China, then it adopts the lens of gender to explore how gendered citizenship is constructed for Chinese female one-child generation and the potential dilemma/struggle arise during the process. The study of the construction of gendered citizenship for Chinese young women in different Chinese cities will offer an setting to consider how women's identities are situated in Chinese local contexts and constructed by transnational networks together with globally ideas (Nakano, 2014). This research will contribute to the field of citizenship from gender lens with particular focus on Chinese female single-child generation.

Citizenship Education with Chinese Characteristics: The Role of Ideological-Political Education in Nurturing Students' Social Engagement

Yaobin Tong, Shenzhen University

In the Chinese higher education system, citizenship education is typically delivered through Ideological-Political Education (IPE), a mandatory module for all Chinese students. The Chinese government has increasingly emphasised the importance of IPE in nurturing students' political knowledge and fostering official values to guide their social lives. This article examines how IPE cultivates university students' sense of citizenship and encourages their engagement in public affairs. Adopting an empirical research approach, the author collected data through interviews with IPE teachers and students at four universities in China. A critical analysis of the data was conducted to explore how Chinese students present, analyse, and discuss public affairs in IPE classes and in broader university life. The findings highlight several key factors. First, most students express a strong eagerness for social engagement, and teachers are generally supportive of providing opportunities for such engagement within their teaching practices. Second, both students and IPE teachers share an unspoken understanding not to elaborate on sensitive social issues in the IPE classroom, due to concerns about censorship and political overinterpretation. Third, both groups prefer informal or even private settings for enacting social engagement, such as canteen, hall of residence, and private seminar room, using these spaces as interactive and productive platforms. Based on these findings, the author argues that while IPE is viewed as an important platform for cultivating citizenship knowledge and preparing students for social engagement, it is a less productive space for actual practice. Instead, informal settings are typically favoured by students and teachers as important venues for active social engagement with public affairs.

C0307 Gender Expression and Resistance

Precarious Freedom: Rural Women and Individual Ethics in Post-1990s Chinese Native-soil Narratives

Yi Fu, University of Edinburgh

The rise of individualism in rural China has recently drawn attention to the deruralisation process — the historical phenomenon through which rural China loses its intrinsic cultural forms as a result of modernization. Resonating with the broader trend of individualization in post-reform China, deruralisation has primarily been analysed through sociological and anthropological prisms. Due to state-controlled individualization, Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim believe that the rise of Chinese individualism follows a top-down approach as opposed to the market-driven Western

archetype. However, this essay argues that literary representation forms an aesthetic intervention that supplements the unidirectional mode of state-controlled individualization, especially in its portrait of rural women's heterogeneous experiences amid the often masculine notion of deruralization. This essay demonstrates this through a close reading of Sun Huifen's short story, "Two Women in Xiema Village" (2002) which intertwines mixed threads from inter-generational competition for power to the representation of patriarchal divides. At the same time, this essay draws on the literary representation of individualization's defining feature — the disembedding without re-embedding process, wherein new social forms are enforced on the rural women as the traditional ones tend to disintegrate. It shows that the precarious freedom of individualization is implied in the nascent power of rural women, one that is subversive, uncertain, yet temporal at the same time. As such, female writers' native narratives exemplify the tense encounter between rural women's (mis)understanding of selfhood and agency and the homogenized notion of managed individualization, which often overshadows the plurality of rural experiences shaped by gender relations.

Challenging Gender Norms: Cross-Dressing and Female Resistance in Ming Dynasty Novel **Menghe Tian, Dong Hua University**

This study explores the phenomenon of female cross-dressing in Ming Dynasty Ethic novels, focusing on its social and psychological motivations and cultural implications. Drawing from *Xingshi Yinyuan Zhuan* and other representative texts, it examines how women in these narratives consciously used male attire to subvert societal norms, challenge Confucian gender roles, and negotiate their identities within a patriarchal framework. Employing Susan B. Kaiser's social psychology of clothing theory, the research investigates the symbolic and practical dimensions of cross-dressing as a means of resistance and self-expression. By analysing the interplay between clothing, gender, and societal expectations, the study sheds light on evolving gender consciousness and the complexities of female representation in Ming Dynasty literature. This work contributes to understanding the nuanced dynamics of gender and identity in historical and cultural contexts, offering fresh perspectives on the intersection of literature, social norms, and individual agency.

Korean Popular Culture and the Chinese Young Men's Body Aesthetics in the Context of Consumer Identities in Contemporary Urban China **Haiqing Li, Curtin University**

Korean cultural globalization has influenced youth cultures globally, including China (Joo, 2011; Kim, 2013). While there is extensive research on the impact of Korean popular culture on Asian pop culture, the intersection with local perceptions of masculinity, especially among Chinese urban young men, remains underexplored. This research addresses this gap by examining how young Chinese urban men integrate Korean pop culture aesthetics into their grooming practices, analysing the social significance for Chinese masculinity within the context of transnational cultural flows (Butler, 1990). Through 20 semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, the study explores participants' engagement with K-pop-inspired fashion, skincare, and body aesthetics in their microsocial contexts. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Van Leeuwen, 2008) is also employed to juxtapose interview data with media texts, examining how 'Korean aesthetics' among Chinese young men are represented in official policies and public documents. Building on Appadurai's (1990) mediascape theory, this research emphasizes the multi-directional nature of cultural flows in the globalized world. It highlights how Korean cultural elements, rather than merely being imposed, are actively recontextualized and integrated within Chinese society, contributing to the evolving perception of masculinities among Chinese urban young men. This study adopts a conceptual framework incorporating Foucault's governmentality (Foucault, 2007), biopolitics (Foucault, 1990), and Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1990) to analyse individual agency within macrostructures. As such, this study contributes to the existing field of research on Chinese masculinities, the body in

society in China, and how transnational cultural flows are understood and embodied in local contexts.

Patriarchal Order Discipline in the Construction of Female Identity: Gender Expression in Contemporary Chinese Feminist Films

Anran Zheng, Queen's University

Over the past several years, Chinese feminist films have visualized the stories of various female characters who seek to establish their identities through continuous exploration and self-reflection, transforming from “the other” into “the subject.” Although extensive research has analysed the progress of Chinese new-generation feminist filmmaking in terms of the usage of female narrative subjects, the positive portrayal of women, and the discourse power of female characters, it tends to overlook the subtle and pervasive influence of the patriarchal order on the underlying logic of these films. Employing textual analysis method and interpreting the image as a visual text, this paper examines four recent Chinese feminist films: *Spring Tide* (Lina Yang, 2019), *Girls Always Happy* (Mingming Yang, 2018), *Angel Wears White* (Yan Wen, 2017) and *What's in the Darkness* (Yichun Wang, 2016). Directed by mainland Chinese women filmmakers, these films centre on characters undertaking journeys of self-discovery and personal growth, often culminating in open-ended narratives that oscillate between reconciliation and departure. By exploring how women resist the disciplining power of the patriarchal order in their pursuit of identity, this paper engages with Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of the mirror stage to reveal the persistence of the underlying framework of the patriarchal order both in the public sphere and the field of family relations. Specifically, running away or seeking reconciliation is often the best option for those trapped in a dilemma with no exit to break free. Mirror images of “the other”, such as the constrained mother-daughter relationship, also result in obscuring the construction of the female character's subjectivity. Moreover, even though female characters eventually form identities, female traits are still suppressed and “castrated” in the process when they strive for subjectivity in public sphere.

C0308 Drifting Meanings: Everyday Objects, Religious Practices, and Border Encounters in Taiwan-China Relations

This panel of research papers examines the complex and often unexpected ways in which everyday objects—religious statues, waste, ghosts, and cotton dolls—mediate Taiwan-China relations at the everyday life level. Moving beyond conventional political and economic frameworks, these papers explore how materials and beliefs that traverse the Taiwan Strait become entangled in local practices, spiritual interpretations, and contested national and cultural identities. Song-Chuan Chen's paper explores the journey of Buddhist and Daoist statues that drifted to Taiwan's Matsu Islands during the Cultural Revolution and became central to local religious communities. These waterborne deities not only shaped grassroots religious practices but also played a role in evolving cross-strait interactions, which have more recently become a focus of Chinese state propaganda. Chengyu Yang examines another kind of drifting presence on Kinmen's beaches: waste from the Chinese mainland and the ghosts of fallen soldiers. Through local responses to both material and immaterial “unclean things,” this paper reveals how borderland communities navigate the intersection of environmental, political, and spiritual forces in everyday life. Hsiao-Chen J. Lin's study of Taiwan's cotton doll community uncovers how seemingly mundane consumer objects become highly politicized, facilitating both cross-strait interactions and subtle acts of resistance against political control. Together, these papers illuminate how material and spiritual encounters across the Taiwan Strait shape lived experiences, grassroots agency, and contested narratives of sovereignty and cultural identity. By focusing on objects that drift—whether by ocean currents, economic trade, or digital networks—this panel highlights the ways in which Taiwan-China relations are continually renegotiated through everyday practices.

Waterborne Deities in Matsu: Lore and Sites of Grassroots Cross-Strait Religious Interactions

Song-Chuan Chen, Warwick University

This paper explores cross-strait relations from the perspective of grassroots religious practices. It argues that Taiwan and China are increasingly drifting apart due to political divergence, which directly impacts religious interactions. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), many Buddhist and Daoist statues, along with other historical artifacts, were destroyed as part of efforts to reshape China's cultural landscape. Some of these castaway wooden statues drifted across the Taiwan Strait and washed ashore in the Matsu Islands—the maritime frontier of Taiwan and a symbol of the liberal world during the Cold War. Seeing these displaced deities as both objects of pity and symbols of the miraculous, local residents rehoused them in existing temples and even built new ones in their honour. Over time, these sites became focal points for thriving religious communities and sources of miraculous lore. When cross-strait relations began to thaw in the early 1990s, these religious communities initiated pilgrimages to the deities' original hometowns in China, fostering new connections across the strait. Matsu's history of religious exchanges with China encapsulates the broader dynamics of cross-strait interactions at the grassroots level. In recent years, however, these religious ties have become a major target of Chinese Communist Party propaganda, which seeks to frame shared religious culture as evidence of Taiwan's historical and cultural belonging to China. This study draws on fieldwork conducted in both China and Taiwan, as well as interviews with those who established the temples and organized or received pilgrimages. Using the phenomenon of waterborne deities in Matsu as its central focus, this paper examines how religious practices both shape and reflect the evolving cross-strait relationship, highlighting the growing divergence between Taiwan and China.

Navigating with “Unclean Things”: Ghosts and Drifted Waste on the Beaches of Kinmen**Chengyu Yang, University of Bristol**

This paper explores the beaches of Kinmen to illustrate an alternative aspect of maritime borderlands beyond the often-discussed themes of gyres, infrastructures, and drifting objects associated with border governance. By examining the “unclean things” - waste from the Chinese mainland found on Kinmen's beaches and the ‘ghosts’ of soldiers who perished on these shores - I aim to bring in the immaterial aspects of spirituality and local techniques of living with “the haunted”; and how this immaterial aspect is integrated into local inhabitants' response to the unexpected material “invasion” of waste and animal remains on their shores from the mainland. From China's African swine fever outbreak, when dead pigs from the mainland regularly washed ashore, to today's uncountable medical and household waste, Kinmen's beaches have, for decades, become destinations for mainland waste carried by current and tides. From the border governance perspective, actively securitising these beach debris as threats has been seen as a way for Taiwan to construct a sovereignty distinct from PRC through daily practices of institutional forces. Nevertheless, Kinmen's local residents often perceive this waste as unintentional encounters that impact their everyday lives, and often become the counterforce of the securitisation. Viewing waste as both mediums and agents of border negotiation, I examine how Kinmen residents' grassroots understanding of beach waste intertwine with their interactions with another type of “unclean thing” on the shores — ghosts. This blended perspective fosters Kinmen inhabitants' grounded approach to the “unclean things” arriving from PRC, promoting inclusivity and diverse oceanic imaginations.

How politics permeates the everyday: an ethnographic case study of Chinese cotton dolls in Taiwan**Hsiao-Chen J. Lin, University of London**

This study follows the Taiwanese cotton doll community both online and offline to investigate how cotton dolls became highly politicised as mundane objects. As a result of how the Taiwan-China geopolitical conflict permeates the everyday life of ordinary persons, the phenomenon of political inspection and consequent resistances emerged through the trading of cotton dolls. This study finds

these objects to be mediums that can carry a myriad of shifting meanings, and these meanings—such as symbolic parenthood—can be contested and overwritten as political acts. It also explores the parallels of symbolic kinship and political kinship between the cotton doll communities and between the nation-states, and argues that the everyday practices of rearing cotton dolls and creating new symbolic kinship systems are tactics of resistance against attempts of social control such as political inspection. This three-part resistance—tactical ambiguity, semantic noncompliance and symbolic kinship—has the potential to mediate the conflict between the political ontologies of Taiwan and China by facilitating trade and other interactivities between the Taiwanese and the Chinese communities while allowing irreconcilable political discourses from both communities to coexist alongside each other through alienation of the doll mother figure and her political subjectivities.

C0309 Pop Culture and Modern Interpretation

New direction for Tibetan commercial cinema? Examining Western and Crime genre in Jigme Trinley's Tibetan film adaptation 'One and Four (2023)'

Luodeng Ouyang, University of Liverpool

Over the past decade, realist depictions of Tibetan culture, religious beliefs, and societal transformations have become an obvious characteristic of so-called Tibetan New Wave cinema, with Pema Tseden's films standing at the forefront of this movement. However, the commercial film market tends to prioritise audience-oriented narratives that cater to mass entertainment demands, such as road movies, romance films, crime thrillers, and Western genres that have historically had limited association with Tibetan cinema. Moreover, for a long time, scholarly examinations of Tibetan cinema have focused on the narratives of the lives of pastoralists and the spiritual plight of Tibetans in the face of economic and political pressures. Although Hollywood has dabbled in Tibetan-themed films since the 1930s, as one of the classic Hollywood genres, the Western is not a genre that has found much adoption in Tibetan film and is hence a largely uncharted area of scholarly investigation. This paper will analyse the film *One and Four* (2023) by Pema Tseden's son, Tibetan director Jigme Trinley. I will argue that Jigme Trinley strategically integrates the narrative structure of the Hollywood Western, Crime and film noir genres in adapting the eponymous indigenous short story by Tibetan writer Chiangyong Tsering, published in 2016. Earlier Tibet-themed films were often shaped by Hollywood's Orientalist lens, which frequently relied on mystified representations while Tibetan directors' realist films deeply tended to be rooted in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy or focused on social transformations. *One and Four* (2023), however, adopts a tightly structured, suspense-driven plot that emphasises moral ambiguity, distrust, and survival—characteristics more commonly found in classic Westerns and film noir. By transposing these genre conventions to the distinctive landscape of the Tibetan plateau, Jigme Trinley pioneers a new approach in the cinematic representation of Tibet.

Audience Laughter and Cultural Power Shifts: Decanonizing Cao Yu's *Thunderstorm* in Contemporary China

Qi Yang, University College London

This study examines audience laughter during Beijing People's Art Theatre's *Thunderstorm* performances since 2014, a phenomenon that has sparked debates within Chinese intellectual and public spheres. Cultural critics like Yang Li-Xin (2014) interpret this laughter as evidence of declining cultural literacy, while younger audiences attribute it to outdated acting and conservative staging. However, evolving interpretations of *Thunderstorm* as a canonical tragedy remain largely unexamined, rendering these debates a form of discursive violence that reinforces elite control over meaning-making and dismisses audience agency. To address this gap, I apply Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic struggle (1989)—a contest wherein collective actors with different forms of capital (cultural, social, and political) impose their 'legitimate vision of the social world'—to examine how mass audiences, intellectual elites, and political authorities have constructed and contested *Thunderstorm*'s canonical status since its 1935 debut. Through a historical review of *Thunderstorm*'s

creative process, performance, and reception, I argue that while the play initially resonated as a “popular drama”, as seen in Shanghai’s marginalized media, it was later eclipsed by intellectual elites’ redefinition as a “social problem drama” critiquing feudalism, notably under Zhou Yang’s ideological discipline during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Even *Thunderstorm*’s original prologue and epilogue, crafted by Cao Yu to evoke a tragic theme of ruthless destiny, were excised for perceived alignment with feudal values. Reframing contemporary audience laughter within this historical context, this study interprets it as a subversive rupture in elite interpretations, reviving a marginalized melodramatic reading. Rather than mere audience miscomprehension, this laughter underscores a shift in Chinese theatre between high art and mass spectacle, driven by state-endorsed canonization and commercial forces privileging audience engagement. By tracing *Thunderstorm*’s contested status, this study contributes to broader discussions on literary (de)canonization and the dynamic negotiation between elite and mass aesthetics in contemporary China and beyond.

From the UK to China: Hobbyist-led Localization of the Tabletop Wargame *Warhammer 40K* through a Practice-Based Approach

Ruotao Wang and Peilin Li, University of Leicester

Warhammer 40K, which is the most famous tabletop miniature wargame in the world, was created by the UK company Games Workshop in the 1980s. Since the early 2020s, *Warhammer 40K*’s cultural influence has sharply increased in China. The project focuses on the cultural integration of *Warhammer*, which explores how the practice of hobbyists circumvents political and capital intervention to anchor the Western sub-culture within the Eastern socio-political and cultural structure. Through participant observation and case study, this research—rather than relying on fandom frameworks focused on media consumption—synthesizes the serious leisure theory and the original Text-Object-Creation (TOC) model to understand how Chinese players transfer *Warhammer 40K* from a wargame to a materialized medium which becomes the regional cultural carrier and integrates with the local power structure. The study will account for the progress of acceptance of *Warhammer 40K* under the conditions of technical, economic, social and censorship in China, based on the cases that contain (1) hobbyist-led translation and community intelligence, (2) miniature painting employing communist aesthetics, (3) a government-endorsed *Warhammer* painting class at a Shanghai night school, (4) female appropriation of a male-dominated culture through nail art and miniature-painting influencer roles. The investigation reveals the openness of text, the fictional science worldview, the tangible miniature, and a niche market integrated into a unified and flexible creative platform with low risk. Rather than a form of fan resistance, this process reflects how cultural imports are domesticated through participation, adaptation, and material practice. Hence, *Warhammer 40K* gains a position rooted in sociopolitical reality in contemporary China. This study offers a new analytical pathway for understanding how practice-based cultural forms embed themselves within state-aligned governance systems in East Asia.

D0401 Local Development: Material and Consciousness

Re-narration and Remaking, China’s Cultural Discourse on the Silk Road—A Case Study of the Silk Roads: *the Routes Network of Chang’an-Tianshan Corridor* World Heritage Designation

Sofia Jing Jing, Chinese University of Hong Kong

Today, the Silk Road is regarded as a cultural symbol with profound political connotations in China, but how the Chinese official narratives define its cultural implications remains a valuable topic that requires in-depth exploration. *Silk Roads: The Routes Network of Chang’an-Tianshan Corridor* is China’s only Silk Road-named international cultural project, and within it, China selected 22 representative sites. Therefore, a careful examination of the selection and application process of these sites by the Chinese authorities provides an essential analytical pathway to fully and effectively understand the political use of the cultural attributes of the Silk Road by the Chinese authorities. In order to understand the selection criteria of these sites, this study focuses on the Hexi Corridor—a

concentrated zone of World Cultural Heritage sites—as the research area. Notably, the investigation selects Yunzhuang Temple (雲莊寺) and Shengrong Temple (聖容寺) (3rd century CE), which were excluded from the project's list but hold significant academic, cultural, and local importance. These temples are considered "non-typical" objects and are compared systematically with the selected sites of this project to deconstruct the Chinese government's operational logic in defining the Silk Road as a cultural symbol. This study employs the latest related achievements in Dunhuang Studies, archival analysis, ethnography, and historical comparative methods to systematically compare the cognitive differences among local communities, regional authorities, China's national narrative, and UNESCO. This paper argues that the selection of typical heritage sites by the Chinese authorities represents a strategic re-narration by the Chinese central government through UNESCO to redefine the cultural context and symbol of the Silk Road. This approach has also led to an issue: cultural heritage sites not included in the list are often widely neglected in terms of preservation.

Lighting rivers and banks: lightscares in Changsha and Wuhan

Federica Mirra, Birmingham City University

From the lowered car window, a moving spectacle of colours and images unfolds before the eyes as one crosses the central Juzihou Bridge in Changsha. This vibrant and dynamic vision is part of the LED lightshow One river, Two banks (一江, 两岸), which illuminates the waterfront and skyline of Changsha for more than 25km every night. Commissioned by the local government and the Department for Tourism and Culture, LED lightshows are the result of the cooperation among officials, real estate and lighting industries, as well as designers and engineers. This paper analyses lightshows in Changsha and Wuhan to articulate the power-dynamics inherent within space-making in these two Chinese cities. Whilst pyrotechnic shows have long been used as political tools throughout history, LED lightshows represent new ways to perform power, combining technologies with design and culture. Additionally, this paper examines how lightshows provide a new urban landscape for the city, transforming its identity whilst boosting tourism and nightlife economy. Specifically, they extend the daylight-city-image into a nocturnal lightscape made of LED pixels, suffused illumination and razor lights. Widely public, regular in their rhythms, and encouraging contemplation and digital dissemination, these light performances are top-down projects that are nevertheless consumed and reproduced by the people. This paper collects on-site observations, photographs, and interviews with a light designer and engineers from electronics manufacturer Leyard Group (利亚德光电集团股份有限公司) in Changsha and Wuhan. Overall, this paper articulates the process of making lightshows to understand the ways in which urban space and its rhythm are shaped. Last, it aims to develop more porous understandings around urban and light design, society and visual culture.

Enhancing International Communication of Chinese Local Culture Through TCSOL: A Case Study

Hongwei Liu, Hebei University of Engineering

Meng Wang, University of Hull

The global dissemination of Chinese culture goes beyond grand national narratives; it also incorporates diverse expressions of local culture from perspectives of common people and micro-narratives. This case study explores the globalization of Chinese culture by integrating Handan's ten major cultural lineages into task-based, step-by-step TCSOL (Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages) classroom teaching, fostering international students' cross-cultural empathy. This approach establishes an effective pathway for the international dissemination of Chinese culture that integrates both local characteristics and global perspectives. The findings suggest that constructing an international communication platform through local culture teaching activities in a TCSOL classroom and interpreting the local culture from the lens of "the other" constitute a positive exploration of the globalization of Chinese culture.

D0402 Education in Question

Parents' Educational Involution in the Summer Holidays: A study based on interviews with 32 families in Shanghai

Leiping Bao, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences

Rachel Murphy, University of Oxford

Research in East Asia indicates that declining birth rates are exacerbating the phenomenon of “Educational Involution”, whereby parents invest significant time and energy in competing for limited educational resources. Despite increasing family investments, the overall societal capacity for higher education has not been expanding, to achieve a win-win scenario of both personal gains and collective growth. The solution to educational involution is often seen as lying in educational reform and changes to selection systems. This study analyses in-depth interview data from 32 families with children aged 9–14 residing in Shanghai, including 15 migrant families and 15 local families. By comparing time use for education, choice of tutoring, living arrangements, and perceptions of educational burden-reduction policies, the study identifies four kinds of family strategies: Proactive involution, Anxious involution, Boundary-breaking involution, and Taotai (淘汰型) involution (elimination-type involution). The findings reveal that educational involution is not merely a result of resource scarcity but also an outcome of the interplay between state policies, institutional structures, and societal forces. Future reforms must therefore extend beyond the education sector to encompass broader societal structural changes.

Blankets of Leaves and Treasure in the Soil: Reconsidering Early Childhood Education and Care in Urban China through Children's Public Park Intra-action

Bonan Liu, Münster University

In urban China, public parks serve as communal spaces where diverse social interactions unfold daily. This ethnographic study examines how young children from a local kindergarten engage with more-than-human elements in a public park situated directly opposite their school. Unlike the structured and child-centric environment of the kindergarten, the park is a multifaceted public space not specifically designed for children, yet it becomes an integral part of their daily experiences. Through regular visits facilitated by their teachers, children interact with natural and human-made materials found within the park. In autumn, for instance, they collect large fallen leaves to use as blankets in imaginative play, and unearth ceramic fragments from the soil, treating them as hidden treasures. These activities highlight the dynamic entanglement between the children and the park's material and social landscape, reflecting a form of learning and development that extends beyond traditional classroom settings. Drawing on posthumanist theories, particularly Barad's (2007) concept of entanglement and Haraway's (2016) notion of sympoiesis, this study explores how such interactions challenge conventional perceptions of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in China. The findings suggest that ECEC should not be confined to institutional boundaries but recognized as a relational process emerging through children's engagements with their broader urban environment. The public park, with its rich tapestry of natural elements and cultural artifacts, offers a unique context where children navigate and interpret their world, fostering resilience, creativity, and a sense of community. This research contributes to the discourse on Chinese urban childhoods by emphasizing the significance of public spaces in children's educational experiences. It calls for a revaluation of ECEC frameworks to incorporate the potential of communal environments, advocating for educational policies that recognize and integrate the learning opportunities present in urban public spaces.

Social Transformation through Labor: Lida Xueyuan and Its Rural Education Department

Duncan Brouwer, University of Hawai'i

This study is a brief intellectual history of the pedagogy and institutional structures of the Village Education Department (*nongcun jiaoyuke* 農村教育科) of the Republican era Shanghai academy

Lida Xueyuan (est. 1925). It is an attempt to situate the ideological commitments of the department in its global context through the concept of “work-study” (*gongxue* 工學), a theory and praxis that advocated for equivalency of mental and physical labor, which was first established in the early twentieth century Sino-French vocational education program known as the Diligent Work-Frugal Study Movement (*liufa qingongjianxue yundong* 留法 勤工儉學運動). The principal objective of this study is to understand the essential nature of the pedagogy and institutional formulations and commitments of the Lida Xueyuan Village Education Department, the key to which I argue lies in “work-study” ideology, itself. In the process of situating Lida Xueyuan Village Education Department in its world historical context amidst the concerns of the Diligent Work-Frugal Study Movement, this study also challenges the popular notion that the Diligent Work-Frugal Study Movement simply disintegrated into Communism in China in the early 1920s by offering up Lida Xueyuan as a successor institution and the inheritor of many of the Movement’s fundamental ideas. As such, the study takes Lida Xueyuan as the institutional reification of the “work-study” ideology of the 1910s Diligent Work-Frugal Study Movement, grounding the transmission of “work-study” ideology in the *real* educational structures of the academy’s Village Education Department which actively exercised these principles well into the Nanjing Decade (1927-1937). This approach also guarantees that this study will not remain relegated to an unanchored and abstracted history of ideas, but will instead ground the argument for the transmission of “work-study” ideology in China in a concrete example that demonstrates the *actual* interplay between “work-study” ideas and institutional structures.

Stay-at-home fathers and early education: co-learning, cultivating values and negotiating co-Parenting

Fei Huang, University of St Andrews

Stay-at-home fathers (SAHFs) consistently highlight their children’s education and development as a key priority and central aspect of their caregiving. While existing research on SAHFs has predominantly focused on the Global North, the implications of their caregiving practices for self-perception and intergenerational dynamics remain largely unexplored in the Chinese context. Drawing on multiple in-depth interviews with 22 SAHFs, this paper examines the reasons behind two primary approaches to early childhood education and child development: (1) structuring fathering routines by attending zaojiao ban (早教班; early childhood education institutions) with their children and (2) using home-based methods until their children reach kindergarten age. Despite differences in routines, all participants emphasised co-learning with their children and sought to instil ideological and attitudinal values they considered “desirable”. Notably, none of the fathers sought assistance from their parents or in-laws. While most resisted intergenerational help due to differing child-rearing methods, a few cited geographical constraints as a limiting factor. Analysing SAHFs’ narratives on childcare routines, parenting attitudes and intergenerational co-parenting reveals how their perceptions of their initial motivations for assuming the SAHF role evolved over time in response to their caregiving experiences. By exploring how education and child development translate into “being there” and “caring” within SAHFs’ narratives, this paper contributes to ongoing debates on child-centred parenting in urban China. It also demonstrates how these practices both reinforce and challenge paternal authority embedded in the traditional yang/jiao (养/教) dichotomy in fatherhood ideals, while interrogating how unequal power dynamics in caregiving responsibilities persist, mutate and transform across generations.

D0403 Buddhism: Operation and Representation

Monitored by Officials, managed by Buddhist Monks (督以官，守以僧) : Revisiting the Cooperation between Government Officials and Buddhist Monks in Charity Work in the Song
Marco Ming Ho Lam, SOAS

In the Song dynasty (960-1270), with the rise of neo-Confucianism, the role of Buddhist monks in charity work shifted from organisers to assistants, who were invited by government officials to run

charities. Previous publications only provide preliminary observations about the cooperation between government officials and Buddhist monks in charitable works (the cooperation) in the Song dynasty. I will revisit this topic to provide a detailed discussion on the cooperation and try to answer the following four questions: Why did this kind of cooperation happen during the Song period? How did officials and Buddhist monks cooperate? What was the significance of this cooperation, and in particular the Buddhist contribution to it, in the Song? And finally: What was the attitude of the officials towards Buddhist monks? This paper will focus on the charitable works in the Liang Zhe Dong Lu (兩浙東路), Liang Zhe Xi Lu (兩浙西路) and Jiang Nan Dong Lu (江南東路) (today's Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Anhui and Jiangxi regions). This paper explores to what extent the study of gazetteers, supplemented by the *Song huiyao* (宋會要), can show how the role of Buddhist monks in charity changed with the appropriation of Buddhism by the state after the Tang dynasty (618-907), why officials supported the collaboration with Buddhist monks and why they looked favourably at it. I will use the example of 1) the ordination certificate as a case study to discuss how Buddhists connected with the court to shape this cooperation and 2) charitable institutions such as homes for the elderly (*yangji yuan* 養濟院), clinics (*anle lu* 安樂廬) and orphanages (*ciyou zhuang* 慈幼庄) to explore this cooperation.

Becoming Image: Buddhist Ontology and the Spatial Consciousness of King Hu's Films

Dailin Zhao, King's College London

This paper examines the Buddhist philosophical logic of the cinematic image in King Hu's *Dragon Inn* through a comparative engagement with Buddhist concepts, landscape painting theory, and film theory. I reframe Hu's films as a practice of ontological intervention, in which Buddhism is not merely presented as narrative content but embodied as a philosophical system that shapes the film's visual, affective, and perceptual processes. In the first part of this paper, I trace the development of Chinese landscape painting theories and their ontological and epistemological entanglements with Buddhist thought. I argue that landscape painting functions not as a representation structured by scattered-point perspective (*san dian toushi fa*), but as a generative field of image-consciousness. Grounded in the Buddhist axiom of dependent originations (*pratītyasamutpāda*), this spatial logic renders the image a momentary configuration arising from interdependent conditions. Building on this framework, the second part turns to Lam Nin-tung's theorisation of cinematic space, which draws upon the principles of landscape painting to articulate a *navigational spatial consciousness*. By placing Lam's ideas in dialogue with Buddhist philosophy, phenomenology, and Deleuze, I highlight their shared concern with consciousness as fluid, decentred, and relationally constituted through interbeing. In the final part, I turn to *Dragon Inn* as a site where these philosophical and aesthetic frameworks converge. Rather than following readings that interpret Hu's cinematic images as an expression of cultural nationalism or as exercises in stylistic virtuosity, I examine how spatial composition, camera distance, and viewer positioning are mobilised to construct a cinematic field of dependent originations where consciousness is conceived as a mobile and dynamic process that in-forms an assemblage of interrelated image, perception, and affect. Through this reading, I reposition Hu's work beyond the constraints of cultural essentialism and propose it as a philosophical intervention into broader debates on cinematic ontology.

The Impact and Response of Japanese Buddhism's Expansion in China Around the Boxer Rebellion

Tingyu Zhou, Shanghai University

In the late Qing Dynasty, Japanese Buddhist missions in China drew widespread attention and resistance from Chinese society. With the shifting international landscape and increasing complexity of Sino-Japanese relations, Japan's Buddhist community actively expanded its influence in China. Major sects such as *Jōdo Shinshū*, *Sōtō shū*, and *Rinzai shū* played significant roles in these efforts. They not only established branch temples and schools along China's Southeastern coast but also ventured into inland provinces to conduct missionary work. These activities had a considerable impact on Chinese society and alarmed the Qing authorities. On the one hand, influx of Western

missionaries and the progress of modernization gradually led to the decline of traditional Chinese folk religions and Buddhism. On the other hand, to safeguard national interests and preserve indigenous culture, the Qing government repeatedly rejected and resisted Japanese Buddhist missions. Motivated by protectionist considerations, local governments also took measures to prohibit Japanese missions, including negotiating with the Japanese Ambassador, accusing Japanese monks of "harbour the bandits," and directing banning or interfering with missionary activities. Frictions between the two countries regarding Buddhist missions shed important lights on the complex religious, cultural, and diplomatic dynamics between China and Japan at the time. This article, drawing on archival documents, aims to illustrate the conflicts of interest and the power struggles between the two countries in religious diplomacy surrounding the missionary question during this period.

Fundraising, Donations, and the Economy of Buddhist Book Publishing in Modern China

Gregory Adam Scott, University of Manchester

The oldest dated printed book in the world, the Diamond Sutra produced in 868 CE, was sponsored by an otherwise unknown layperson with the merit from the production being dedicated to his parents. A thousand years later, Buddhists in China were still printing works funded by donations in order to generate religious merit. In the early twentieth century, however, with the arrival of modern printing technologies, new models of social organisation, and new forms of economic instruments at their disposal, Buddhists in China embraced a diverse range of approaches to funding their publication work, from joint-stock enterprises to not-for-profit branches within lay associations. My presentation will explore the innovative ways in which Buddhists in modern China approached the challenges of printing material during often uncertain economic and social environments, and how they adapted core religious values of giving to modern technologies and systems of textual distribution. In doing so I aim to tell one part of the larger story, that of the wider cultural and societal changes in late-Qing and Republican China that were similarly shaped by the production and distribution of mass media.

D0404 From Ming to Qing: Spirituality, Morality, and Mental Mapping

Hyperfeminine desire: Encounter and reunion with female ghosts in Ming-Qing illustrated texts

Peiyuan Deng, SOAS

This research examines the representation of hyperfeminine desire in the depiction of female ghosts in Ming-Qing (1368–1912) illustrated texts, analysing how these ghostly figures embody surreal femininity and transgressive agency. Through an interdisciplinary approach of literary analysis, art history, and gender studies, this research explores the intertextuality of late imperial Chinese publications that negotiate the anxieties addressing virtue, affection, and desire. Central to this study are illustrated publications, ranging from *The Peony Pavilion* (1617) by Tang Xianzu (1550–1616), *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (1766) by Pu Songling (1640–1715), to *Hua Zhong Ren* (Girl in the Painting; 1644) by Wu Bing (1595–1648), which reveal the correspondence between visual culture and literary presentation. These works depict female ghosts as transcendental figures of longing, sorrow, and seduction, reflecting contemporaneous cultural concerns about gender in a broader social context. The study engages with secondary scholarship on gender, materiality, and visual culture, including Charlotte Furth's analysis of medicalised femininity, Wu Hung's concept of "feminine space", and Judith Zeitlin's work on spectral femininity in theatre. It builds on Maram Epstein's argument of heart-mind, affection, and desire in Ming-Qing social narratives. Lara Blanchard's research on female interiority and beauty in desire and Li Wai-yee's explorations of love and illusion in material culture further inspire the analysis of how ghosts mediate female subjectivity and self-expression. By synthesising art historical, literary, and gender studies approaches and insights, this research reveals the aestheticisation and moralisation of hyperfeminine desire in late imperial China, offering investigations of the intertextuality between visuality, gender performance, and cultural representation.

Constructing Moral Space: The Spiritual World in Late Ming and Early Qing's Prose on Literati Studio

Heung Sing Lee, Hong Kong University

Literati Studio is a space that literati entrust their ideals, and this physical space is often endowed with rich spiritual connotations through the writings. This type of text, Literati Studio Essays, provides us with an excellent channel to explore the spiritual world of the literati, yet it has not been given enough attention in previous studies. The late Ming and early Qing dynasties were a special period in history. In terms of ideology, the late Ming literati's indulgence in pleasure contrasted sharply with the early Qing literati's eagerness to rebuild the morality, and the choice between the pursuit of officialdom or seclusion during this period was also complicated by the context of dynastic change. In the specific space of literati studio, the literati express their different spiritual styles through the prose writing. The writing is either focus on describing the specific scene of the studio, revealing the personal spirituality, or rendering moral discourse by interpreting the name of the studio, revitalizing the ancient prose style of the Tang and Song. This paper intends to discuss and compare the literati studio prose of Gong'an School with that of the early Qing prose writers, such as Jiang Chenying(姜宸英), Wang Maolin(汪懋麟), and Wang Wan(汪琬), in order to reveal the rich and contradictory spiritual world of the literati at that time.

Navigators of the East: Mental Maps and the Dissemination of Maritime Knowledge in the Qing Empire

Sijian Wang, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

This study investigates the transmission of maritime knowledge within the Qing Empire, from grassroots levels to the imperial administration, as evidenced by the 1826 sea transport project. It explores the development of maritime concepts, navigational techniques, and sea routes during the 18th and 19th centuries, and how these elements collectively influenced the production of imperial cartography. The paper presents an alternative to the European "colourless network" perspective by highlighting a pre-modern Chinese indigenous epistemology of maritime space, shaped from the perspective of seafarers. It illustrates how maritime spaces were constructed based on the subjective experiences and knowledge of sailors in 19th-century China, contrasting with the impersonal network models prevalent in European navigation practices of the same period. Ultimately, this paper proposes that 19th-century Chinese maritime practices may serve as a potential "fourth model" of maritime space, contributing to the enrichment of maritime history theories within global historical perspectives.

Late Qing circulation and sponsorship networks of *Quanjie lu* (Record of exhortations and admonitions)

Katherine Alexander, University of Colorado, Boulder

Quanjie lu (Record of exhortations and admonitions), a *biji* collection originally produced during the crisis decades of the mid-to-late nineteenth century, experienced a resurgence of interest during the chaotic decades of the early twentieth century thanks to its claim to transform society through stories about the inexorable justice of Heaven. The first instalment came together in 1843 when its editor/compiler, Liang Gongchen (1814-1887), was merely thirty *sui*. By the time its tenth instalment was posthumously published in 1888, during his career as a mid-level Qing official, Liang had assembled over 1300 anecdotes and morality tales to serve his stated aim of repairing and moralizing society. Liang's work attracted considerable encouragement and support at every stage of the process, with reprints of the early instalments appearing even as the collection continued to grow, along with prefaces by Liang's friends voicing fulsome praise for its moral value. In this paper, I present the results of analysing twenty Qing era prefaces and postfaces to *Quanjie lu*, as well as a detailed donor list from an 1888 edition, in order to track how this morality text was transmitted and how its sponsors framed their involvement. These prefaces reveal how Liang

understood his work for a nation in crisis and how his supporters responded to his moralizing intentions. Often assumed to be rational skeptics, *Quanjie lu* reminds us that this group of literati and government officials shared ghost stories and tales of heavenly punishment not with a sense of ironic detachment but as serious documentary evidence of the subtle and just workings of Heaven, even as their empire crumbled around them.

D0405 Beyond the Margins: Commentary as Intellectual Inquiry, Political Tool and Aesthetic Dialogue [P]

This panel brings together four case studies spanning different dynasties and textual traditions to examine how commentary functions as a dynamic medium for intellectual, cultural, and aesthetic exchange. From Daoist and Confucian classics to late imperial fiction and poetry, each paper highlights the ways in which commentators negotiated their historical circumstances, personal convictions, and inherited textual legacies. The first paper traces the evolution of the Daoist concept of *miaoben* (妙本, “Wondrous Foundation”) in *Daodejing* exegesis from Gu Huan through Cheng Xuanying, culminating in Emperor Xuanzong’s imperially commissioned commentary. By linking ontological concerns with pragmatic governance and religious aspirations, this study exposes how *Chongxuan* (重玄) commentators harnessed the notion of *miaoben* to shape imperial and metaphysical discourse. The second paper investigates a proverb—“Careless laying up of things excites to robbery” (慢藏诲盜)—drawn from the *Yijing* and frequently cited in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* during the late Qing. Through a close reading of shifting “high” and “low” justice debates, the paper shows how quoting and critiquing a classical maxim became a vehicle for broader social and moral reflection. By examining victim-blaming attitudes in popular media, this project reveals the flexible power of commentary as both ethical and political instrument. A third paper turns to Lin Yunming’s (林云銘) 17th-century readings of *Zhuangzi* (莊子) and *Chuci* (楚辭). Confronted with dynastic upheaval and forced to navigate personal crises, Lin drew on these two classics to imagine strategies for preserving moral integrity in times of political peril. His commentarial choices illustrate how individual experiences of loyalty and adversity can reshape textual interpretation, shedding light on commentary as a mode of self-fashioning. Finally, the fourth paper explores the intersection of poetic commentary and visual arts during the Ming-Qing transition. Focusing on Du Fu’s poetry, it examines how commentators such as Li Yindu (李因篤) championed a spontaneous, “limpid” aesthetic (淡) in verse. These readings found visual echoes in the contemporaneous painting tradition—particularly dry-brush landscape scenes reflecting the fractured historical moment. Through intertextual dialogue, commentators and painters alike reframed Du Fu’s works to resonate with a new cultural and political climate. Taken together, these studies demonstrate the rich and varied functions of commentary across time. Whether deployed to uphold imperial authority, critique social norms, reconcile personal ideals, or bridge the arts of poetry and painting, commentary emerges as a vital channel of intellectual creativity and cultural negotiation.

The Wondrous Foundation 妙本 *Miaoben* and the Dao: the Evolution of *Miaoben* in Sui-Tang Commentaries on the *Daodejing*

Yinlin Guan, University of Edinburgh

This paper examines the genesis, evolution, and philosophical significance of the concept of *miaoben* (妙本, “Wondrous Foundation”) within the *Chongxuan* (重玄, “Twofold Mystery,” following Friederike Assandri) tradition of the Sui and Tang dynasties, culminating in Emperor Xuanzong’s imperial commentary on the *Daodejing*. Although Gu Huan (顧歡) references *miaoben* only once in the received text, his brief mention constitutes the earliest attestation of the term in *Daodejing* exegesis, foreshadowing subsequent developments. Building on this foundation, Cheng Xuanying (成玄英) foregrounds the ontological dimension of *miaoben* in his methodological approach, weaving together Daoist metaphysics while revealing the multi-layered structure of reality central to *Chongxuan* thought. The analysis further illuminates how Emperor Xuanzong (唐玄宗), by

integrating political authority into his exegetical work, not only affirmed the ongoing synthesis of Daoist and Buddhist ideas but also accorded *miaoben* a heightened status—bridging ontological, soteriological, and practical concerns—in his commentary on the *Daodejing*. Ironically, while Xuanzong’s prolific usage propelled *miaoben* into wider cultural parlance, its occurrence in later *Daodejing* annotations diminished. Through close textual examination, this paper argues that *miaoben* is a linchpin, uniting transcendental theory with pragmatic cultivation, thereby shedding light on the interplay between philosophical inquiry, religious aspiration and political governance in the Xuanzong’s imperial commentary on the *Daodejing*.

Careless Laying up of Things Excites to Robbery: Reasonable Victim-Blaming Comments on *Dianshizhai Pictorial* in The Late Qing

Yiming Zhao

“Careless laying up of things excites to robbery, (as a woman’s) adorning of herself excites to lust.” 慢藏诲盜，冶容诲淫 (following James Legge’s translation) This is a rarely mentioned proverb and is alien to the contemporary concept of justice in China. This proverb implies a victim-blaming attitude. However, this proverb was frequently quoted in the late Qing period, especially in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (点石斋画报). This victim-blaming proverb was initially recorded in the *Book of Changes: I Ching (Yijing)* (易经). Since the explanation made in *Zhouyizhengyi* (周易正义), the proverb was understood as a metaphor (niyi 拟议) dealing with high justice. High justice concerns the problem of who should rule, and connects closely with Confucian morality. The mainstream of elite commentaries from the Tang Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty concentrates on Confucian morality about the arts of ruling. The citation of the proverb in the late Qing on *Dianshizhai Pictorial* showed the popular use of it. The popular usage mainly dealt with low justice. Justification of the victim-blaming tendency of the proverb in the context of low justice aligned with the social context for the development of exposé narratives (qianze xiaoshuo 谴责小说). The proverb itself became an object of criticism in the late Qing, conforming to the reforms and reflections then. The citations of the proverb suggest that “low justice” was derived from high justice and was not wholly distinct from high justice.

Dialogues with the Works of Ancient Masters: Commentaries as a Method to Resolve Crises **Shiqi Cai, University of Edinburgh**

Commentary is a common method for pre-modern scholars to construct dialogues with the works of ancient masters, and to express their own ideas and thought processes. Hence, the life experiences of the interpreters are the one of the fundamental bases of the analysis of the motivations and main arguments of the commentaries. In this research, two commentaries in the 17th century, *Zhuangzi yin* (莊子因) (*In Accordance with the Facts of Zhuangzi*) and *Chuci deng* (楚辭燈) (*Thorough Illumination of Chuci*), both written by the Confucian scholar Lin Yunming (林云銘) (1628-1697), are utilised as case studies. Born in the Ming Dynasty, Lin passed the imperial examinations and became an official during the Qing Dynasty, which was frequently threatened by fake accusations, political upheavals and rebellions. These events never challenged his stalwart adherence to Confucian virtues, especially the virtue of loyalty. However, Confucianism could not offer him a third path other than being a martyr or betraying his ideals. Master Zhuang (莊子) (ca.369-ca.286 BC) and Qu Yuan (屈原) (ca.340-278BC) hence became the inspiration of the way to resolve crises from a weak and useless position and the representation of the same adherence to the virtue of loyalty in difficult times. In previous research, Lin’s extraordinary life experience was often not differentiated from the experiences of Ming loyalists and the zeitgeist of the 17th century. As a result, the distinctive tension present within the two commentaries resulting from Lin’s own experiences, were consequently ignored. In this research, based on my review of Lin’s writings of the pivotal moments in his life, I will attempt both a reconstruction of his psychological reaction to the two ancient masters and a further review of Lin’s unique motivations and focus on these two classics as opposed to other works.

Dissolving Sound and Sight: Commentaries on Du Fu's Poetry and Their Dialogue with Visual Arts During Ming-Qing Transition

Deyi Zhang, University of California, Davis

This paper explores how the commentaries of the Ming-Qing transition cultivated a poetic aesthetic characterized by spontaneity and limpidity (*dan* 淡), closely intertwined with the contemporary painting style of deformed and bare dryness (*ku* 枯). Focusing on Li Yindu's (李因篤) (1631–1692) commentaries, this study highlights his emphasis on Du Fu's works of everyday life and immediate scenes, which foreground present experience rather than history and knowledge. Li underscores the clarity and limpidity of Du Fu's language and suggests that this poetic aesthetic dissolves sound and sight—the emphasis of poetics from the Six Dynasties through the High Tang—while resisting the excessive philosophical abstraction of Song poetry. This heightened focus on the sight also resonates with the visual arts. The interplay between poetic commentary and visual art becomes evident in landscape painting during the Ming-Qing transition, which frequently portrays broken landscapes and ruins. Du Fu's poetry was widely incorporated into painting during this period. Dai Benxiao's (戴本孝) (1621-1693) Qinzhou (秦州) paintings translate Du Fu's limpid aesthetic into a visual form characterized by dry-brush technique with a seemingly deformed style. Introduced by Fu Shan (傅山) (1607-1684), this painting style gained popularity among Ming loyalists. Fu's commentaries on Du Fu's poetry and his own artistic practices further reveal a profound interconnection between poetic interpretation and visual art.

D0406 State Control, Institutional Persistence and In-between Authority

Newspapers in 1957: Censoring and diversifying media during the Hundred Flowers Movement

Ivi Fung, University of Oxford

A big character poster wrote “We want freedom of speech, freedom of news, and independent journals!” during China's Hundred Flowers Movement in 1957. This cry was timely as student activism - like posting big-character posters, organizing freedom forums, and publishing independent journals - was largely absent in mainstream public newspapers. It was only in mid-June that such reports began to appear, only to condemn these actions retrospectively. This raises the question: how did students' concern for freedom in newspapers reflect the broader complexity of state media control? This paper explores the development of newspapers during the Hundred Flowers Movement, specifically examining the discrepancy between official public newspapers and internal publications (*neibu cankao*). I bridge the scholarship of the Hundred Flowers movement (MacFarquhar, 1974; *Teiwes*, 2017) and the media history of the PRC (Patricia Stranahan, 2016; Volland, 2003). This paper attempts to analyze how the censorship mechanisms of Maoist China shaped the flow of information. The paper presents a case study of media in Wuhan, as activism was particularly radical in Wuhan University. While internal publications detailed student activities, public newspapers like *Hubei Ribao* (the provincial government's official newspaper) remained silent. I argue that the censorship system operated on three levels: direct orders from the Central Committee, implicit guidelines on internal news, and the self-preservation strategies of journalists and editors. Meanwhile, big-character posters (*da zi bo*), a form of alternative media that gained prominence during this period, showcased students' mistrust of the official press. As big character posters were not subject to the same institutional constraints as official newspapers, it became a medium for students and faculty to express their political views. However, over time, this medium evolved into a tool of performative loyalty under state pressure in the anti-rightist campaign and the Cultural Revolution. I argue that the shifting nature of big-character posters—from a space for diverse political expression to one dominated by party-aligned rhetoric—demonstrates the central government's anxiety for control over textual authority.

State Censorship and the Cross-cultural Reception of *danmei* in the international online fandom

Xiuqi Huang, University of Edinburgh

This paper studies censorship's impact on the cross-cultural reception of *danmei* in the international English-speaking online fandom. *Danmei* is a popular subgenre of Chinese internet literature that centres around male-male romance, which burgeoned in China in the 1990s. *Danmei* and its international fandom require scholarly attention especially because of two paradoxical recent developments: continuous crackdown on *danmei* literature and media in China on the one hand, and thriving interest of international *danmei* fans and ever-growing translation and licensing of *danmei* novels by English language publishers on the other. Existing scholarships largely discuss *danmei* fandom in the domestic Chinese context, but lack detailed studies of the international reception of *danmei*. While censorship is a principal topic in *danmei* research, few have considered censorship's effect on international fandom and its perception of Chinese popular culture, wherein not only the literary texts themselves but Chinese cultural policies and official tendencies are translated into the global fandom experience. I will argue that seeing through the lens of state censorship on *danmei*, the international fandom is confronted with a fractured perception of *danmei* culture and Chinese popular culture, which is full of conflicts and tensions between state cultural policies, *danmei* authors and products, and the international market. This fractured perception contrasts with the picture of homogenous unity of contemporary Chinese culture promoted by the top-down, state-initiated advocacy of the global expansion of Chinese culture. My methodologies include close reading of primary texts of *danmei*, evaluation of paratextual materials and related state policies, and examination of online fandom texts and exchanges.

Philanthropic Authoritarianism: Targeted Governance of Philanthropy in Xi's China
Hsin-Hsien Wang and Wei-Feng Tzeng, National Chengchi University

This article examines the governance of philanthropy in China under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during the Xi Jinping era. It argues that the CCP employs a strategy of targeted governance to manage philanthropic activities. This approach involves selectively applying two logics: control and mobilization. The CCP targets organizations or individuals involved in charity based on the perceived threat they pose to the regime. Through this targeted approach, the CCP effectively pools charitable resources while minimizing the risk of fostering organizational opposition from civil society. We analyze the CCP's use of targeted governance in philanthropy, categorizing its strategies for managing charity organizations and mobilizing resources from the wealthy. This analysis contributes to the understanding of philanthropic authoritarianism, a concept that describes how authoritarian regimes can utilize philanthropy to strengthen social control, enhance legitimacy, and consolidate their rule.

D0407 From Ghosts to Flags: Media, Memory and Kinship Across Queer Sinophone Spheres [P, H]

This panel explores how queer individuals in the Sinophone world navigate identity, kinship, and visibility through media and cultural practices. Focusing on music, film, and festival activism, these four papers illustrate how queer subjects challenge hegemonic structures and cultivate alternative forms of belonging. By examining the intersection of political resistance and creative expression, this panel sheds light on the ways queer life takes shape beyond institutional recognition.

The first paper explores how queer female Chinese listeners engage with Taiwanese music, using it as a tool for identity formation, imagination about future, and resistance against China's heteronormative constraints. The second paper examines the use of ghost culture in Taiwanese queer cinema to explore queer intimacy, loneliness, death, and kinship, offering new narrative models that combine local customs with modern queer experiences. The third paper argues that *All Shall Be Well* (2024) imagines a form of queer kinship that persists beyond death and outside legal recognition, using melancholia as a generative force. Through everyday mourning, care, and resistance, the film reconfigures queer relationality within and against the boundaries of normative family structures. It ultimately argues for a vision of queer kinship that embraces ambivalence and ongoingness, resisting closure and reimagining loss as a foundation for future belonging. Finally, the

fourth paper investigates feminist and queer flags at Chinese music festivals as a form of visual activism, exploring how feminist and queer fans navigate censorship, express affection, and resist official gender discourse through such nonhuman media at festival spaces. By emphasizing listening, cinema, and cultural spaces as strategies for queer world-making, this panel advances ongoing discussions on the intersection of media and queer cultural politics within Sinophone studies.

Dead Queer, Happy Ending, and Ghost Culture: A Critical Inquiry into the Emerging Taiwanese Queer Cinema

Jie Zhou, UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television

This essay focuses on two Taiwanese queer cinemas about homosexuality—*Dear Ex* (Mag Hsu and Chih-yen Hsu, 2018) and *Marry My Dead Body* (Wei-hao Cheng, 2022). It argues that queer intimacy and queer isolation are meticulously planned through careful camera framing, and a new model of narrative in queer cinema is invented due to the participation of Taiwanese local ghost culture in these two films. Three sections are included in the main chapters: 1) framing queer intimacy and isolation; 2) resolving kinship tension, making queer dead; 3) reading queer death through the ghost culture in Taiwan. My analysis first investigates the camera framing that contributes to the presentation of queer intimacy and queer isolation through camera movement, actor blocking, and composition. The second part explores kinship tension in queer family, proclaiming that the death of queer is closely linked to kinship tension because the death in both films symbolized the absence of a heterosexual family member and leads to the resolution of the conflicts between queer and the heterosexual family. In the last chapter, how the death of queer is further formulated through a ghost culture lens is discussed from the angle of the invisibility of queer and their threat to heterosexual society in the last section. The inclusion of ghost culture opens a new queer cinema narrative model, restating the importance of traditional local culture to cinema.

All Shall Be Well: Reimagining Queer Kinship and the Generative Power of Melancholia **Peihua Yue, Duke University**

Drawing on close textual analysis of Ray Yeung's 2024 Hong Kong film *All Shall Be Well*, this paper examines the affective and political labour of queer mourning, asking how queer kinship can be reimagined within, against, and beyond the constraints of biogenetic family structures. Focusing on an elderly lesbian couple whose decades-long partnership is abruptly disrupted by death and familial dispossession, the paper interrogates how quotidian acts of intimacy, grief, and care unsettle normative kinship frameworks. While the film foregrounds the precarity of queer life in the absence of legal protections, it also gestures toward forms of resistance rooted in melancholia, improvisation, and everyday activism. This article pursues three primary aims. First, it situates *All Shall Be Well* within a broader discourse on queer kinship and Sinophone visual culture, arguing that the film presents cohabitation with heteronormative structures not as capitulation but as a strategic site of negotiation. Second, it theorizes melancholia—drawing on Freud, Butler, and Muñoz—as a generative force through which the deceased partner's presence lingers, transforming loss into a scriptive site of care, memory, and queer world making. Finally, the paper explores how domestic spaces, such as the couple's shared home, become performative vessels of mourning and resistance, fostering community-based kinship that persists in the wake of legal erasure. Ultimately, this study positions death not as a conclusion but as a catalyst for queer relationality, where grief and solidarity forge an alternative model of belonging that refuses closure and thrives in ambivalence. Through this lens, *All Shall Be Well* offers a vision of queer futurity born not despite loss, but through it.

Silence Screaming: Alternative Gender Flags at Music Festivals in China **Xinyao Li, Columbia University**

Since the emergence of music festivals in China, fans have formed a tradition of making flags, bringing them to festivals, signing them, and waving them at festivals. And nowadays, flags no longer

solely revolve around music but also gender expressions. Numerous fans—primarily feminist and queer groups—create and carry alternative gender flags—feminist and queer flags—to festivals, constituting a unique landscape at festivals. However, given that such flags constantly encounter censorship, how do fans manage to create and carry them to festivals? What triggers them to take the risk to do these? And what do such flags mean to fans themselves and official gender discourse? Through participant observation at music festivals, in-depth interviews with feminist and queer fans, and digital ethnography on relevant social media posts, the study investigates the way fans bypass the censorship mechanisms to make and bring such flags to festivals and the intertwinement between such flags, as nonhuman media, with fans’ affection and official gender discourse. Firstly, it shows that since the boundary of censorship is not rigid but ambiguous, fans develop strategies to act between visibility and invisibility with their agency. Secondly, it explores fans’ motivation for their actions and demonstrates that such flags express their affective desire to be seen and establish their affective identification within the festival space. Finally, it analyses the visual and textual design of such flags and indicates that such flags are not just affective media but also resistant media that break gender norms and engage gender issues, challenging the patriarchal and heteronormative discourse at the official level. By exploring such flags in festival settings, the study provides insights into understanding the dynamics among fandom, affect, and gender studies within pop culture and highlights a form of gender activism in offline spaces in current China and beyond.

D0408 Philosophies Across Time

The Awareness of Time in Tang Xianzu’s Eight-Legged Essay and the Exploration of Life Philosophy in His “Four Dreams of Linchuan”

Giovanna Tsz Wing Wu, Education University of Hong Kong

Tang Xianzu’s eight-legged essays and chuanqi dramas are essential for understanding his thoughts, yet the significance of his eight-legged essays has often been overlooked. The primary goal of composing eight-legged essays is to “speak for the sages.” Trained as an essayist from an early age, Tang developed a mindset akin to that of Confucian sages. In his eight-legged essays, he frequently incorporated Buddhist and Daoist philosophies to address gaps in the interpretations of earlier Confucian philosophers. This interplay of diverse thoughts enabled him to articulate his philosophy of life. However, some of Tang’s contemporaries criticised the ideas embedded in his essays as lacking purity. These critiques, rooted in the Cheng-Zhu school, highlight how Tang’s views diverged from Confucian orthodoxy. Nevertheless, do these criticisms spark renewed interest in Tang’s work today? His eight-legged essays illuminate the trajectory of his thoughts. If the process of writing these essays allowed Tang to contemplate the meaning of life, then the chuanqi dramas became the arena where he enacted those ideas. This paper will delve into Tang’s eight-legged essays alongside his “Four Dreams of Linchuan.” By contrasting the rational reasoning in his essays with the emotional expressions found in his drama, this study seeks to reinterpret Tang’s awareness of time and reassess the intrinsic value of The Four Dreams.

“The Usefulness of Uselessness”: Zhuangzi’s Resistance to Instrumental Rationality and Its Limits

Qian Li, Tsinghua University

Zhuangzi’s concept of “the usefulness of uselessness” is a key to understanding the core ideas of *Zhuangzi*. From a socio-historical perspective, Zhuangzi’s concept of “the usefulness of uselessness” can be seen as a response to the domination of instrumental rationality in the political sphere since the mid-Warring States period, which extended its control over academia, life, and the human spirit. This reflects Zhuangzi’s deep concern for reality and his stance of resistance. By categorizing forms of resistance based on two criteria—individual/community and subjective/objective—Zhuangzi’s resistance can be divided into four dimensions: individual-subjective, individual-objective, communal-subjective, and communal-objective. Zhuangzi set an example of individual-objective resistance through his own career choices and defended the last stronghold of communal-subjective resistance through his theory of the Daoist tradition. However,

when compared with Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolent non-cooperation, Zhuangzi's resistance appears to have significant limitations. To generate a more constructive force for social reform, the idea of "the usefulness of uselessness" should expand toward both the communal and objective dimensions.

The Unattainable Ideal from China to the World: Daoist Philosophy, Martial Arts, and their Global Appeal through Martial Arts Cinema

Nan Zhou, University of Southampton

Daoist philosophy, rooted in Chinese thought for over 2,500 years, has evolved significantly from its origins with Laozi to its contemporary interpretations. Meanwhile, martial arts, branded as "Guoshu" (national art) during the Republican era, have been embedded in Chinese culture for nearly a century. Chinese martial arts cinema, as one of the most influential genres in Chinese cinema, has played a pivotal role in popularising these practices and Chinese philosophy globally. Although extensive historical research exists on Daoist philosophy, martial arts, and martial arts cinema, the underlying reason for their enduring appeal, when considered in conjunction, remains largely underexplored. This paper argues that the fascination with martial arts, the pursuit of martial arts cinema, and the reverence for Daoist philosophy are fundamentally rooted in the human longing for an unattainable ideal and a psychological 'need' for transcendence. By examining Daoist philosophical concepts and tracing the historical development of Chinese martial arts cinema—from its establishment in the 1930s to its globalisation through Bruce Lee in the 1970s and its renewed international appeal in the 2010s—this study explores how these cultural narratives resonate with audiences across different eras and regions. Through a comparative analysis of martial arts films from the 1930s, 1970s, and 2010s, this paper also investigates the socio-political and cultural contexts that contributed to the genre's success in China, Hollywood, and beyond. By situating martial arts cinema within the philosophical framework of Daoism, this paper reveals the genre's capacity to convey the quest for harmony, transcendence, and an idealised vision of human potential. Ultimately, this research seeks to illuminate how martial arts cinema not only reflects but also shapes global perceptions of Chinese culture and philosophy.

Laozi as Supporting the Welfare State: A Hermeneutics of Intention

Michael Schonken, Tsinghua University

Scholars have long interpreted Laozi's philosophy of *wúwéi* (無為) as a kind of economic liberalism because of *wúwéi*'s emphasis on minimal government intervention. However, little research has explored the *Daodejing*'s potential alignment with the welfare state, characterized by high taxation, wealth redistribution, and strong social safety nets. This omission is notable because, while welfare governments' methods seem contrary to *wúwéi*, their outcomes—reduced inequality, less competition, and greater well-being—are clearly closer to Laozi's ideal society than the outcomes of the free-market model. This research adopts a *hermeneutics of intention*, arguing that the *Daodejing* should be interpreted not merely by the literal means it proposes, but by its underlying intentions: harmony, simplicity, and general wellbeing. Interpreting Laozi with this hermeneutic, welfare states—though not minimalist in method—better fulfill Laozi's ultimate intentions than laissez-faire models do. Thus, the supposed contradiction between *wúwéi* and the welfare state dissolves when policy means are distinguished from philosophical ends.

Four themes are explored:

- Social Competition: Welfare redistribution in welfare states aligns with Laozi's critiques of striving (Ch. 3, 13, 44).
- Desire and Consumerism: High taxation typical in welfare states helps restrain the over-consumption Laozi warns against (Ch. 3, 12, 67).
- Well-Being: Welfare policies generally prioritizes health (physical and mental) over ambition, echoing Laozi (Ch. 3, 12).

- Technology: Regulatory obstacles to technological innovation in some welfare states may reflect Laozi’s suspicion of technological innovation (Ch. 80).

Finally, the author argues that expansive welfare-state bureaucracies need not contradict *wúwéi* when interpreted through a hermeneutics of intention: Laozi aimed to limit the interventions of rulers external to the people, whereas modern democracies, in principle, express the people’s collective will—making such governance a form of self-order. This view is supported by Laozi’s “wheel hub” (*gǔ 轂*) metaphor (Ch. 11).

D0409 Teachers and Teaching

Lao She as an Overseas Chinese Language Teacher in the UK

Weiqun Wang, University of Nottingham

Lao She (老舍), or Shu Qingchun, a renowned modern Chinese writer, taught Chinese at the School of Oriental Studies (now SOAS, University of London) from 1924 to 1929. During these five years, he began his literary career, writing his first three novels—*Philosophy of Old Zhang* (老张的哲学) Zhao Ziyue (赵子曰), and *Er Ma* (二马)—marking an essential phase in modern Chinese literature. However, fewer attention has been paid to his status as an overseas Chinese language teacher in the global history of Chinese language teaching. His teaching experience reflected British attitudes toward Chinese teachers and language education at the time and even today. Through this experience, Lao She emerged as one of the earliest post-New Culture Movement intellectuals to explore cultural differences between China and the West, becoming a cultural ambassador for Chinese language and culture. However, due to events like the Cultural Revolution, original records of his early teaching years are scarce in mainland China. The Cold War’s ideological tensions further constrained discussions of this period. Lao She himself rarely spoke about his time teaching in Britain, and when he did, his accounts—often shaped by the discourse of the era—portrayed feelings of loneliness and isolation. This article reconstructs Lao She’s teaching experience, investigating his appointment, work, and life in Britain. It recreates the teaching conditions at the UK through School of Oriental Studies, including how the Chinese teacher’s job was created, the textbooks used, teaching methods, salary and payment, colleagues and working conditions, and additional duties. It also examines his views on British society, his reasons for leaving Chinese teaching, and his decision to pursue a literary career. By comparing Lao She’s experience with those of contemporary Chinese language teachers in the UK, the article highlights the impact of this period on his career and on the development of Chinese language education in Britain and beyond.

A Framework for Applying ChatGPT in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language: Practices and Insights

Lulu Jiang, Shanghai International Studies University

With the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence, ChatGPT has emerged as a transformative tool for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL). This study systematically examines the application framework and practical strategies of ChatGPT in TCFL, focusing on three key areas:

- its role in classroom instruction, including language teaching, cultural education, and assessment support
- its contribution to educational resource development, such as digital textbooks, online platforms, and intelligent tutoring systems
- the challenges and limitations of AI-assisted teaching, particularly in terms of accuracy, adaptability, and pedagogical effectiveness.

This research is based on empirical case studies conducted in Chinese language classrooms across different proficiency levels, where ChatGPT was integrated into vocabulary acquisition, grammar correction, interactive dialogue practice, and cultural immersion activities. Additionally, quantitative survey data from 200 international learners of Chinese and qualitative feedback from 15 language instructors were analysed to assess ChatGPT’s effectiveness in improving learner engagement and instructional efficiency. Statistical methods, including pre- and post-test comparisons along with

sentiment analysis of user responses, were used to evaluate learning outcomes. While AI-powered tools offer innovative possibilities, their integration into TCFL requires a critical and adaptive approach to ensure pedagogical reliability and cultural appropriateness. This research contributes to the discourse on AI-assisted language education and provides evidence-based insights into optimizing ChatGPT's application in international Chinese language teaching.

Teachers Before Students: Geography Textbooks and Teacher's Guides, Nation-Building, and Emotions about China's Manchuria, 1901-1937

Cruz (Wenhao) Guan, The Ohio State University

This paper investigates the visualization of "Manchuria" and China's nation-building projects in Chinese-language geographical educational materials, particularly textbooks (教科書) and teacher's guides (教授書). During the past two decades, Chinese- and English-language works have noticed the significance of textbooks in constructing a modern Chinese nation-state. However, it would be inaccurate to presume that students could always read these geography textbooks by themselves: they were taught and guided by teachers and geography teacher's guides, which included detailed geographical knowledge and strong emotions (anger, anxiety, sorrow, and pride) that could not be found in textbooks. By showing teachers what and how "Manchuria" should be taught, my work argues that this understudied type of teaching material has also played a significant role in the construction of this begonia leaf-shaped Chinese nation, in which its spatial imagination could not be separated from geographical knowledge and emotional teaching methods. Further, it is essential to note that the term "Manchuria (滿洲)" was not always used in these geography teacher's guides. While a few of these guides used "Manchuria," many others emphasized the territorial imagination of "three northeastern provinces (東三省)" in this newborn Chinese nation-state. This work will demonstrate that the spatial imagination and geographical knowledge of "Manchuria" was an evolving process, in which China's nation-building projects wielded geographical knowledge and emotional teaching methods to compete with Russian and Japanese imperialist powers.

E0500 Motherhood and Women

Motherhood on Screen: How Chinese Family Dramas Shape Women's Motherhood-Related Choices

Lingjun Wang, University of Leeds

In the context of declining fertility intentions and the frequent introduction of pro-natalist policies such as the second and third-child policy in China, this study examines the role of Chinese family dramas as a form of soft propaganda that conveys implicit ideological messages. Specifically, it explores whether the representation of motherhood in family dramas influences women's perceptions of motherhood and their motherhood choices, potentially generating effects contrary to the nation's intended promotion of childbirth. This paper is a derivative study of my PhD research, focusing on one of my PhD research case studies, the Chinese drama *Love is True* (2021). Using the focus group and textual analysis, I will first analyse how Chinese family dramas construct female motherhood-related images and how these portrayals align with or diverge from state-propagated reproductive discourses. It then investigates the motherhood representations in *Love is True* (2021), centring on three key themes: (1) social expectations and family pressure surrounding motherhood, (2) the work-family conflict faced by mothers, and (3) the physical and mental challenges of motherhood. The focus group participants, who are heterosexual and highly educated women, provide insights into how they perceive these representations—whether they reflect real-life experiences or are dramatised for narrative effect. By examining the influence of these representations on female viewers, this study will assess whether family dramas reinforce or challenge traditional gender norms, particularly the expectation that women must fulfil motherhood to achieve their social value. Ultimately, this research explores the ways in which Chinese television dramas may contribute to the broader discourse on women's motherhood choices, revealing

whether the Chinese family drama serves as a medium that supports or undermines women's autonomy in making reproductive decisions.

Reframing Voices: The Shifting Power Dynamics Between Chinese Women Researchers and Their Female Oral History Participants, 1992–2022

Huili Meng, Nottingham Trent University

Oral history is still a relatively new field in China, but it has grown rapidly in recent decades. While only five papers were published on the subject in the 1980s, by 2018, the number had risen to over 200 per year. Among its many strands, one ongoing debate—much like in Western oral history—concerns the relationship between women, feminism, and oral history. Women-centred oral history projects began to emerge in China in the early 1990s and have continued to increase in number. For female researchers working in this field, engagement with women's oral histories inevitably involves navigating questions from ideological and political perspectives, particularly regarding feminism, history, oral history, and their own gendered identities. Some scholars have identified as feminists or (oral) historians from the outset, while others have revised their ideological and theoretical positions over time through their publications. Some have advocated for “letting women speak for themselves,” yet their preference for edited narratives over raw transcripts raises questions about authorship and representation. This paper examines three major oral history projects on Chinese women conducted by female researchers between 1992 and 2022: Li Xiaojiang's 20th Century Chinese Women's Oral History (1992–2003), Ding Yingzhuang's Oral Narratives of Sixteen Banner Women (late 1990s), and Zhang Lixi and Li Huibo's Women's Oral History (2012–present). It explores three key aspects: (1) how the relationship between researchers and interviewees has been represented in published texts; (2) how project leaders have reflected on or adjusted their roles, methodologies, and theoretical standpoints in their writings and interviews; and (3) how these researchers understand and articulate their identities and research approaches through in-depth interviews.

Cultural Barriers to Divorced Single Mothers' Physical Activity Participation in China

Chunhong Zhou and Győző Molnár, University of Worcester

Rapid economic and social transformations in China over the past decade has contributed to a dramatic rise in divorce rates, and, thus, in single motherhood. Existing research on Chinese divorced single mothers (DSMs) predominantly focuses on financial challenges and social stigma. Yet, research is limited on DSMs' physical activity (PA) engagement that is essential to maintain their general well-being. This paper aims to:

- explore key cultural barriers to DSMs' PA participation;
- offer recommendations for addressing such barriers.

Twenty-eight semi-structured interviews were conducted among DSMs to explore their PA experiences. Voice data were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis through the theoretical framework underpinned by Chinese gender theory. DSMs' PA engagement encounters four key cultural barriers: conventional familial ideologies, Confucian care ethics, traditional gender values, and lack of family support. Confucian Yin-Yang gender ideology emphasized the dominance of Yang (men) over Yin (women) and applied the Nei (inner) and Wai (outer) spatial binary for gendered labor division. Yin-Yang ethics standardized social and personal conduct and justified women's subordination to men by valuing women's domestic roles and devaluing their public roles. Therefore, PA as a public activity is inherently gendered in the Chinese cultural context. The national revival of traditional familial and gender values tends to confine contemporary Chinese women to traditional gender roles, leading to DSMs' experiences of mother guilt, habitual self-sacrifice, mental exhaustion, and insufficient family support for PA. DSMs' PA engagement is impeded by the contemporary presence of traditional cultural values derived from Confucian care ethics. To improve DSMs' PA levels will require a social shift from the Confucian Yin-Yang gender ideology towards a more balanced gender hierarchy. This might be initiated through a careful application of

contemporary evidence on the individual and social benefits of a physically active population, which, in turn, has the potential to help enhance DSMs' overall well-being.

Chang'e as a Feminine Archetype: A Mythological and Cross-Cultural Analysis

João Marcelo Martins

The Chang'e myth, one of the most emblematic figures in Chinese mythology, remains relevant in contemporary times, as the goddess continues to be revered as a symbol of beauty, transcendence, and, above all, mystery—perhaps due to her connection with the moon, which is itself often perceived in this way. This is one of the most enduring and symbolically rich narratives of the country's traditional culture, and this paper aims to explore Chang'e not only as a mythical figure but also as a feminine archetype linked to other lunar myths worldwide. These share a set of details open to discussion, such as the lunar rabbit. Adopting a comparative mythological approach, this study will analyse the role of this goddess as a feminine archetype in her two aspects, positive and negative, providing an intercultural perspective that allows for a deeper understanding of the values and social structures of this culture, as well as how interpretations of this myth have evolved over time. In an era where myths persist in the human collective imagination, indelibly influencing it, the study of Chang'e and her connections to mythical figures from other cultural traditions reveals profound aspects of human experience and psyche, as well as the Chinese (and global) perspective on what is considered the sacred feminine.

E0501 Historical Ethics, Transmission, New interpretation and Translation

Layers of Sediments across the Twentieth Century: The “Chameleon Quality” in Translation in Reform-era China

Ziling Bai, University of Manchester

Since the late 1970s, the People's Republic of China (1949–) has introduced Western literature to the public in the reform era after a long isolation under communism. The translation at this time continued to be guided by the norms of Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism and served socialism, like literature and arts did. This paper revises the belief that the translation of Western literature during this period was influenced mainly by changing contemporary translation policies and suggests that the translation was also subject to the perspectives of translators who grew up in the earlier part of the twentieth century. The paper examines the case of Wang Jiaxiang (1936–), an emeritus professor of English and American literature at Beijing Foreign Studies University, and a prolific literary translator who began translating in the mid-1980s in response to the new cultural policy in the reform-era China. This paper finds that a variety of influences from the earlier twentieth century, for example, the construction of southwest motorways in Free China during WWII, impacted Wang's translation practices in the PRC from the 1980s onward, giving rise to a "chameleon quality" in her translation in the reforming China. The chameleon quality entails a humanistic reading of miscellaneous literature without adhering to any mainstream ideology of society and the changeability of style that follows different styles of the source texts. This quality can be seen as a rehabilitation of humanism and linguistic diversity via translation after the Mao era, and it may be shared by many translators at that time since Wang's case can be prototypical. This paper complements and extends existing scholarships on translation in modern China with a focus on the 1980s and beyond. It also correlates translation practices in the reform era with factors in the earlier twentieth century.

Paratexts as Re-shaping: Exploring Cultural Memories Based on the Cases of David Roy's Translation of Jin Ping Mei

Yun Shi, Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University

This article examines the sinologist Roy's *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, a well-known translation of the Chinese classic *Jin Ping Mei* (金瓶梅). Through exploring knowledge production of *Jin Ping Mei* in the Anglophone world, this article foregrounds the potential of translated literature as a site for

overserving changing memory in the receiving culture. After tracing Roy's encounter with the original book, it uncovers that his abiding interest and the special cultural and social context set the conditions to make the original text new, so as to enable his translation activity possible. Key finding of this article is that with the help of paratexts, Roy is more meticulous about presenting textual memories, cultural memories or personal memories in his translation. He makes every attempt to reshape memories in the translated Jin Ping Mei, presenting a window for observing China through the lens of translated novel.

Interaction between Literature and Film and the National Imagination: A Study on the Association between Film Adaptations of Tang Legends and One Hundred Years of Chinese Cinema (1903-2023)

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The relationship of the Tang legends, a collection of classical literary texts, with Chinese cinema in the past hundred years is reflected in four aspects: firstly, the Tang legends and Chinese cinema in the 1920s and 1930s pursued their "legendary nature" in parallel; secondly, Chinese cinema in the 1940s and 1950s inherited and demonstrated the familial and national sentiment of the Tang legends; thirdly, Chinese cinema from the 1960s to the 1990s adapted the Tang legends with an "inward turn"; and fourthly, contemporary adaptations of the Tang legends in the twenty-first century involved aesthetic and philosophical expression of "authorship". The study of the interaction between the Tang legends and Chinese cinema over the past century helps to trace the classical literary tradition of Chinese cinema, reflecting the tradition of Chinese cinema's use of classical literature to construct the national imagination.

E0502 Religions on the Margin: Atheism, Afterlife and Islam

Constructing the Fantasy Tang in Atheistic China

Fengyi Sun, University of Zurich

China is officially regulated as an atheist state under the communist ideology. However, its religious landscape is always complex, with folk beliefs continuing to influence everyday life. This tension leads to the rise of costume fantasy films (古装奇幻片), which situate fantastical narratives in pre-modern settings to circumvent ideological and political constraints. The Chinese fantasy genre, referred to as Eastern Fantasy (东方魔幻), presents a unique presentation of fantasy with Chinese characteristics. Acclaimed as the Golden Age of Chinese history, the Tang dynasty (AD 618–709) has become a primary setting for such fantasy stories. This article explores key fantastic motifs in these films, tracing their cultural origins in elements such as Gu (蛊), Fangshi (方士), Zhou Fu (咒符), and sarira (舍利). I argue that this fantasy Tang draws on the historical legacies of this cosmopolitan medieval era when Wuxian (巫) practices coexisted with Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. It also draws upon literary traditions such as Zhiguai (志怪) and Chuanqi (传奇) that have contributed to film adaptations. Furthermore, contemporary Chinese fantasy films blend global fantasy conventions with adaptations that align with socialist ideology, reinforcing the state's atheistic stance, which forbids supernatural beings in post-1949 PRC cinema ("建国后不许成精"). While these strategies position Chinese fantasy films as exemplary vehicles for "enhancing traditional Chinese culture," they also limit the genre's development.

The Chinese Catechism: Instrumentalisation of Contemporary Holocaust Commemoration

Yuang Marcus Liu, King's College London

In China's Holocaust commemoration, a Catechism has arisen: the country had never harboured anti-Semitism and was a welcoming haven for Jewish refugees fleeing Hitlerite Europe in the late 1930s. Although ample historical evidence questions the purported Sino-Jewish solidarity, consolidated institutional power enforces the Catechism. By tracing the genealogy of Jewish studies in China and examining the local Catechising practices and their global consequences, this paper

argues that Holocaust memory has been manipulated to serve China's national aims. Overall, this paper sheds light on politicised knowledge production and the circumstantial nature of historical commemoration's ability to elucidate and enlighten. Jewish studies, once a subversive grassroots movement that emerged from China's post-Maoist years, was politicised in the early 1990s as the PRC normalised its relationship with Israel. The new geopolitical reality prompted a wave of institutionalisation, which saw the establishment of Jewish studies centres and the Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum. Selectively choosing sources, these institutions developed the Catechism centred on the Chinese saving the Jews during WWII. Though provincialised due to its disengagement with the Anglophone academia, the Chinese establishment exports its views under the guise of universalism represented by Holocaust memory. With multilingual publications and international museum tours, the Chinese Catechism has successfully shaped international public opinion and former Jewish refugees' representation of China in their recent memoirs. The Chinese Catechism's implications are far-reaching. Globally, it has enhanced the country's image and its relationship with Israel. Regionally, it bolsters China's competition with Japan over historical moral leadership. Domestically, it shifts Chinese nationalism's narrative from victimhood to righteousness. However, the Catechism ossifies China's academic discourse and prevents reflection on the country's troubling historical anti-Semitism, providing the hotbed for the recent avalanche of online anti-Semitism in the wake of the Hamas-Israel War.

Global Knowledge Co-creation and the Left-wing Chinese Christian Theology of Wu Yaozong, c.1919-39

Duanran Feng, University of Oxford

The history of Chinese Christianity has long been shaped by the 'Sinicisation' paradigm, which emphasises how Chinese Christians contextualised an alien, Western faith into Chinese culture. Recently, the school of 'world Christianity' has challenged this perspective, redirecting scholarly attention to how non-Western Christian communities existed in a transnationally connected network. This paper builds on this historiographical corrective and explores how Chinese theology emerged from the global co-creation of knowledge. It examines the case of Wu Yaozong, a theologian who underwent intellectual transformation in the 1930s and devised a radical left-wing theology. It argues that American left-wing thought was a significant but oft-neglected influence on his theological radicalisation. In the 1920s, Wu's involvement in YMCA China and studies in New York exposed him to American left-wing theologians such as Walter Rauschenbusch and H. E. Fosdick. These scholars, while advocating a socially conscious Christianity, insisted that cultivating individual personality was central to social reform. Wu, however, found this emphasis unsuitable for the large-scale institutional change China needed. After reading Chinese works on Russian Marxism in the 1930s, Wu eschewed his early American influence and adopted a more collectivist theology, allowing individuals to submit to the interests of the community. This collectivist turn also led Wu to espouse a quasi-Spinonist, naturalist conception of God. Christianity and Marxism were thus not contradictory, since God was a verbal designation of all universal laws, and Marxism revealed some such laws. By emphasising America's role in exporting radical left-wing thought to Republican China, this paper will highlight how the creation of Chinese theology was a global process, integrating intellectual currents from disparate locations. Global knowledge co-creation did not only occur within the subjectivities of individual thinkers, but also on a supra-subjective level, where thinkers across the world together advanced a certain discipline as a global intellectual community

The Representational Force of China's Public Diplomacy Discourse: An Analysis of China Global Television Network's Legitimation Strategies of Its Claims on Xinjiang and Islam

Ibrahim Akbas, University of Nottingham Ningbo China

China's minority policies towards Muslims in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region have become an issue of contention in global politics that could further damage China's global reputation. Many states and prominent individuals position themselves by reacting either in support of or in

opposition to the treatment of the Muslim minority in Xinjiang. In addition, the influence of transnational Islamic organisations and the separatist Uyghur diaspora threatens China's sovereignty over Xinjiang. Yet, despite the significant global attention to China's minority policies, little academic attention has been given to how the Chinese state aims to communicate its position to foreign audiences. This thesis adopts Critical Discourse Analysis to examine 54 English language Videos about Xinjiang and Islam produced by and broadcast on the China Global Television Network's (CGTN) YouTube Channel. Utilising van Leeuwen's analysis scheme of discursive (de)legitimation strategies, I identify how the Chinese state makes truth-claims about Xinjiang and Islam to discursively legitimise its official positions. One key premise arising from CGTN's narratives is the notion of harmony as a prerequisite for economic development. CGTN presents China's economic development as an opportunity for its audience to gain prosperity. CGTN narratives promise economic development if its audience approves of the legitimacy of China's political worldview. It others contesting voices and associates these with disrupting economic prosperity and undermining China's sovereignty. By utilising Bialy Mattern's conceptualisation of representational force, the thesis concludes that CGTN discursively aims to force its audience to conform to China's worldview. By examining China's discursive legitimising narratives around Xinjiang, the thesis contributes to the research literature on China's public diplomacy and provides a novel framework for understanding the role of (de)legitimation strategies in public diplomacy practice.

E0503 From Classroom to Textbooks: Power and Resistance

"Study well math, physics, and chemistry, and you can walk around the world unafraid Academia as State Project, Counterrevolutionary Threat, and Resistance in the PRC since 1949

Martin Albrecht Haenig , City University of Hong Kong

The connection between (rising) state power and the higher education system remains underexplored in studies. Nonetheless, in the People's Republic of China (PRC), academia has been a vital force since 1949. Influenced by historical episodes like the Self-Strengthening Movement and the May Fourth Movement, China's academic landscape has experienced dramatic changes. In recent decades, it has adopted the modern research university model, which was first conceptualized in Germany and later refined in the United States. This model emphasizes rigorous scientific research, a substantial degree of autonomy from direct state interference, and a liberal arts education designed to cultivate the 'whole person'. Throughout these shifts, academia has frequently been mobilized as a productive force in service of the party-state's developmental goals and strategic priorities. Notable examples include the development of nuclear weapons in the 1960s and Project 523, which was tasked with discovering new treatments for malaria. However, this state-aligned role has coexisted with periods of severe repression, such as during the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Cultural Revolution, when intellectuals and scientists were denounced as counterrevolutionaries and silenced. Individual responses to these dynamics have been multifaceted: Many scholars enthusiastically supported state initiatives, some quietly pursued their own academic interests, and yet others resisted party directives, often at great personal cost. This paper examines these intersecting roles – academia as a state project, an outcast, and a source of individual agency – across the PRC's history. It places special emphasis on changes under Xi Jinping, where increased ideological oversight, a heavy emphasis on STEM disciplines, and a pivot toward 'productive' fields have served to harness sciences for the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." I thereby unpack how academia has fueled China's rise while interrogating the evolving roles and agency of scientists within the given political structure.

Exploring Classroom Silence: Micro-Power Dynamics and Group Dynamics in Chinese University EFL Settings

Xinyi Wang, University of Leicester

This study investigates the phenomenon of student silence in Chinese university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, focusing on the underlying micro-power dynamics and group dynamics

that contribute to this behaviour. While previous research has often attributed classroom silence to cultural factors or individual student dispositions, this study aims to uncover the situational and relational aspects influencing students' reluctance to participate verbally. Employing a qualitative approach, data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with students enrolled in EFL courses at a Chinese university. The analysis reveals that seating arrangements, proximity to the instructor, and peer groupings significantly affect students' willingness to engage in classroom discussions. For instance, students seated at the back or in isolated positions often feel less inclined to participate due to perceived distance from the instructor and reduced visibility. Additionally, the presence of authoritative peers or class leaders can either inhibit or encourage participation, depending on the nature of these relationships. Furthermore, the study examines how classroom management styles and disciplinary practices imposed by instructors contribute to the power dynamics that influence student silence. Strict classroom management can lead to a heightened sense of authority, causing students to adopt a more passive role during lessons. These findings suggest that classroom silence is not merely a reflection of cultural norms or individual traits but is deeply embedded in the micro-power structures and social interactions within the classroom environment. Understanding these dynamics can inform more effective teaching strategies that foster an inclusive and participatory learning atmosphere in EFL settings.

ELT in Chinese General Senior High School: An Analysis of Chinese ELT Textbooks

Francesco Michael Scaringella, University of Milan

Since the 1980s, English language proficiency has been considered as a crucial tool for China's modernization and economic development and has been actively promoted within the education system (Adamson 2004; Vickers & Zeng 2018). Even though the status of English has become a debated topic within Chinese society in recent years, foreign language study, which means English in the majority of cases, is still one of the 'three main subjects' (*san zhu ke* 三主课) of the *gaokao* 高考, the Chinese 'National College Entrance Examination'. Due to its crucial role in preparing students to sit the *gaokao*, this contribution focuses on Chinese general senior high school, and the main analysis tool will be the ELT textbooks currently used in it. More specifically, the aim is to highlight an inherent inconsistency between the guidelines provided by the Chinese syllabus for high schools, called 'curriculum standards' (*kecheng biao zhun* 课程标准), and the nature of the tasks that are part of the English language test of the *gaokao*, which ultimately define the teaching practice in senior high school. As a result, the English textbooks currently used in China display a mixture of influences of both the Grammar-Translation Method, consistent with the nature of the *gaokao* and ultimately with the traditional Chinese teaching method, and the Communicative Approach, especially in the form of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), promoted by the syllabus. In addition, the qualitative analysis of interviews with Chinese high school teachers will explore their attitudes, beliefs and preferences towards ELT in China. In doing so, this contribution attempts to contribute to the academic discussion about foreign language teaching and language policy.

E0504 The Politics of an Aesthetics of Medium: Intersections of History and Society in Chinese Comics [P]

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, *lianhuanhua*—Chinese comics or "picture stories"—mirrored the evolving landscapes of politics and law, satire and art, and of culture and society. As affective media that mobilized the masses, comics became powerful tools for political communication and the promotion of new socialist values. Simultaneously, these visual-textual narratives offered both subtle critiques and direct challenges to social-political norms. This panel will explore the multifaceted nature of *lianhuanhua* through novel sources ranging from archives to cartoonists' collections. Chihho Lin examines Wang Shuhui, a prominent female *lianhuanhua* artist in the early PRC, demonstrating how her romantic narratives promoted the New Marriage Law of 1951 and served as unique expressions of propaganda, contrasting with epic comics of male artists. Jiu Song investigates the spatial dimension of fans' collective memory of Chinese

comics, focusing on two most popular *lianhuanhua* markets and reading zones of 1960s Shanghai. Mariia Guleva explores the devices used to dehumanize and re-humanize antagonists in Fang Cheng's comic strips of the late 1950s. Damian Mandzunowski compares three different types of Chinese comics from 1951, 1981, and 2011, all linked to communist party anniversaries, to analyze changes and continuities in how history was visualized. Together, these papers aim to deepen our understanding of the relationship between comics and the PRC over six decades of change and continuity, exploring the historical significance, ideological dimensions, and enduring relevance of *lianhuanhua*.

Artistic Identity and Gender Dynamics: Wang Shuhui (1912-1985) and Her Gentlewomen in Ancient-Costume *Lianhuanhua*

Chihho Lin, National Palace Museum

This paper explores the art of Wang Shuhui, a distinguished female *lianhuanhua* artist from the "Beijing School" during socialist China (1949-1976). Celebrated for her adaptation of Romance of the Western Chamber (1957), which earned a first-class prize at the 1963 National *Lianhuanhua* Exhibition, Wang is noted as the only female awardee among six. Her career and her art, known for its elegant and delicate portrayal of women in ancient costumes, made her a unique artist in the male-dominated cultural landscape of the era. Born in 1912 to Beijing officials, Wang was trained in the meticulous gongbi style at the Chinese Painting Research Society from age fifteen, specializing in depictions of gentlewomen. After 1949, Wang's mastery in figural painting earned her a position at the People's Art Press, focusing on nianhua (New Year Prints) and *lianhuanhua*. This study examines how Wang Shuhui's major works, including Mulan Joins the Army (1950), Southeast Flies the Peacock (1954) and Romance of the Western Chamber, functioned as propaganda tools that promoted the New Marriage Law and reshaped social norms. The research employs comparative analysis to contrast Wang's adaptations of stories focused on romance and marriage with the epic narratives commonly assigned to male contemporaries such as Ren Shuaiying (1911-1989) and Liu Jiyou (1918-1983). This approach highlights the challenges Wang faced as a traditional style female artist in a patriarchal system and underscores her strategic navigation of societal and stylistic constraints.

Reading *Lianhuanhua* in Shanghai: Disappearing Comic Bookstalls and Street Bookshops as Sites of Fandom Culture

Jiu Song, Heidelberg University

A characteristic element of *lianhuanhua* culture in Shanghai was the widespread presence of dedicated bookstalls and street bookshops selling and renting out the comic books for a small fee. In addition to engaging with the images and texts, fans of *lianhuanhua* interacted at these venues in several ways. This paper asks: How did these spaces contribute to ordinary Chinese readers' memories of *lianhuanhua* culture from the 1950s to the 1990s? Taking the case study to Shanghai, the popular and long-lasting *lianhuanhua* venues located at the City God Temple (城隍庙) and the Confucian Temple (文庙) are of central interest for this study. While early readers borrowed, shared, and purchased *lianhuanhua* at comic bookstalls, however, with their dismantling there has also been a reduction in gatherings of *lianhuanhua* readers. Conversely, in the latter decades, these fans began to hunt and collect (often the same) comic books at used book markets, further evolving the space for fans to read and share both reading materials and impressions. This paper proposes that these various spaces, which facilitated interaction and reading activities, emerged as essential loci of memory for *lianhuanhua* aficionados. Furthermore, it examines the significance and heritage value of sites associated with collective memory. Combining archival sources and recollections of participants, the paper applies the realms of memory theory to examine historical fan culture and readers' interactions. Traces and memories of spontaneous fan behaviour in spreading and collecting *lianhuanhua* imply that individual memories have gradually transformed into a collective and historical memory of *lianhuanhua* culture.

The bad, the poor, and the smart: the roles of Americans in Fang Cheng's comic strips for Manhua magazine

Mariia Guleva, Charles University

Fang Cheng 方成 (1918–2018) was a prolific cartoonist during the first decades of the PRC. He worked at Renmin Ribao 人民日报, but also contributed to other periodicals and acted as an editorial board member at China's nation-wide cartoon magazine Manhua 漫画 between 1953 and 1956. While his main oeuvre consisted of topical cartoons and caricature, Fang Cheng also engaged in the creation of serial comic strips. Two such series were a recurring feature in Manhua in 1957 and 1959: "Uncle Joe 乔大叔" and "American soldiers in Taiwan 美国兵在台湾". Unsurprisingly, the Americans in these strips mostly behaved aggressively and viciously, and on occasion even their absence was loaded with negative significance. More surprisingly, however, Fang's drawings also showed them in different roles, sometimes as victims and other times as tricksters in American society. Such strips were by no means a gesture of dissent; nevertheless, the need to depict Americans in these diverse roles required skilful balancing to keep the drawings ideologically appropriate yet witty. In this paper I scrutinize the stories in these strips and the strategies Fang Cheng used to convey the shifting roles assigned to Americans in them. I aim to show how, remaining unequivocally within the narrow ideological confines and navigating in the unnerving environment after the Anti-Rightist campaign in 1957, Fang managed to depict Americans as human after all—even when dehumanizing them was the predominant mode for cartooning of the time.

Visual Politics of Historical Representation: A Comparative Study of Chinese Communist Party Anniversary Comics, 1951-2011

Damian Mandzunowski, Heidelberg University

Founded in July 1921, to celebrate the 30th, 60th, and 90th anniversaries of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), significant events in the party's history up to those moments were retold in officially published comics. The first of these, the 1951 comic book (*lianhuanhua*) *Thirty Years of the CCP*, was the earliest retelling of the party's history in a longer visual form. As such, it shows which events the CCP deemed relevant for their narrative only two years after establishing the People's Republic of China; it also indicates how the CCP wanted them visualized sequentially. In 1981, in turn, speeches were held and commemorative events organized, there was no official book-length visual narrative. Instead, a short picture story (*kanwu lianhuanhua*) titled "Are You a Communist?" was published in the July issue of a popular monthly comics' magazine, serving as a subtle and indirect commentary on what it meant to be a party cadre at the onset of the Reform Era. Finally, the 2011 artistic graphic novel (*banhua lianhuanhua*) titled *Footprint: The CCP's Great Undertaking of Founding the Party 1911-2011* covers the longest period in CCP history and was once again part of a massive propaganda drive. It invites comparisons with the prior variants and informs about the evolution of the political uses of comics into the New Era. Analyzing each comic separately provides new insights into how political history was visualized; studying the three comics together offers a case study in the politics of visual history.

E0505 Chinese Women in the Digital Age: Identity, Empowerment, and Feminism [P]

The rapidly evolving landscape of digital media in China has reshaped how Chinese women experience and embody gender while also facilitating grassroots digital feminism. Social media platforms such as Weibo, and Xiaohongshu (RedNote), have become key spaces for Chinese women to assert agency and engage with feminist discourse. Notably, the global #MeToo movement gained traction in China through social media hashtags in 2018, providing Chinese women with a platform to speak out against workplace sexual harassment. In this context, this panel draws on diverse theoretical perspectives to investigate how Chinese women actively engage in digital spaces to navigate their identities, challenge traditional gender norms and expectations, and initiate feminist

activism. This work-in-progress panel features four papers from PhD students in sociology, each contributing unique insights into the intersection of media, gender, and feminism in China. Zhang examines how young female audiences of *Ode to Joy* on RedNote engage with the show to reflect on social issues and interpret contemporary femininities, using cultural studies, media theory, and feminist frameworks to explore digital-era feminism. Liang explores how women involved in China's sanitary pad activism navigate political constraints through depoliticized strategies, leveraging consumer rights discourse to mobilise grievances and challenge gender power structures via social media. Wang and Bai examine how Chinese female PhD students abroad use internet dating "self-saving" posts on RedNote to expand limited social circles and navigate marriage pressures. Their findings highlight young women's agentic utilisation of social media. Nevertheless, Fu, Li, and Mi emphasize the heteronormative gender scripts in women-oriented games and reveal how the illusion of agency reshapes women's understanding and experience of being a "girlfriend". Our panel discusses the complexity of women's experience in the digital era - utilising digital media for empowerment whilst also facing the challenges of censorship, consumerism, and rigid heterosexual norms.

Renegotiating woman identities: the tension between media consumption and feminisms in contemporary China

Xiaoyu Zhang, University of York

Ode to Joy is a groundbreaking Chinese television show that centrally features five female characters in a portrayal of contemporary urban femininities. My research is based on in-depth interviews with young female users of the social media platform 'Xiaohongshu'—fans of the show—whose lives are reflected, to varying degrees, in the program. In exploring the show's characters and themes, participants articulate their understandings of key social issues they recognise in their own lives and in broader society and try to use Xiaohongshu to assist in understanding and interpreting the TV show. Chinese feminisms and cultures of femininity in the context of shifting sociocultural paradigms, globalization and digitalization. This research explores how the specific cultural-political and historical landscape of China, Western feminist theories and neoliberal individualism, and the distinctive characteristics of social media have collectively shaped contemporary Chinese women's identities and feminist practices. In particular, I will focus on the role of social media platforms like Xiaohongshu, which have emerged as spaces where narratives of female empowerment intersect with market-driven individualism and consumerism, reshaping women's identities. Renowned theories and concepts such as Foucault's "biopower" (1975), Stuart Hall's "encoding/decoding" model (1973), and Gibson's "affordance" theories (2017) are employed to construct a theoretical framework to analyse viewership, platform dynamics, and gender discourses. From an interdisciplinary perspective of cultural studies, media theory, and feminism, this chapter underscores the complexities of contemporary feminism and cultures of femininity in China, revealing their entanglements with capitalist ideologies, technological mediation, and persistent traditional norms. Ultimately, it sets the stage for deeper inquiry into how digital-era feminism and wider gender discourses negotiate individual freedom, collective responsibility, and structural inequality in urban China.

"Money is the Vote": Women's Sanitary Pads Movement in China

Yaquan Liang, University of Edinburgh

This study examines the "Sanitary Pad Movement", which emerged in China in November 2024 as a digital feminist movement addressing the intersection of gender health rights, gendered consumer rights, and the elimination of gender discrimination. By situating this movement within the broader landscape of contemporary feminist activism in China, this research explores its communication strategies, strategic approaches, societal impact, and its complex interactions with state policies and market dynamics. Under the strict regulation of feminist discourse and offline gatherings by the government, online activism has become the primary avenue for women to articulate their

demands. By targeting corporations rather than the state, the movement strategically circumvented political repression, enabling it to gain momentum and sustain public engagement. From product quality to pricing, design and marketing, the movement has exposed systemic injustices embedded in menstrual product industries. Under the slogan “Money is the vote, every penny you spend shapes the world you want to live in,” participants employed economic boycotts, digital mobilization, and leveraging the state discourse on reproductive policy to pressure corporations for reform. By sparking broader societal discussions on menstrual issues and gender justice, it further challenges gendered exploitation in both the market and society at large. Furthermore, this study examines how the Sanitary Pad Movement builds upon and expands the historical accumulation of China’s digital feminist activism. While online activism is often criticized for being fragmented and unsustainable, this research finds that recent short-term feminist movements have forged a collective memory through social media, becoming a legacy of action for future mobilizations. This nonlinear model of social activism demonstrates how women in China, operating within constrained political spaces, leverage digital technologies to bypass censorship, build momentum, and engage in intermittent yet sustained challenges to gender inequality.

A New Channel for Mate Selection? Analysing the 'Self-Saving' Matchmaking Phenomenon Among Chinese Female PhD Students Abroad on Social Media

Yilin Wang, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and Kun Bai, Newcastle University

This study focuses on understanding the unique challenges faced by Chinese female PhD students who studied abroad in mate selection, aiming to explore how their personal experiences intersect with evolving gender roles and marriage values in society through the posting of 'self-saving posts' on RedNote, a popular social media platform in China. By conducting in-depth interviews with 20 female Chinese PhD students who study abroad in the UK and Hong Kong, this study finds that posting “self-saving” posts is an autonomous attempt for them to meet new people, especially for those who have a limited and fixed social circle. Apart from the love and belonging needs, female PhD students abroad also suffer from marriage pressure from their parents and societal expectations. As studying abroad exposes female PhD students to diverse cultural perspectives and allows them to develop more individualistic attitudes which prioritize personal fulfilment and equality in relationships over traditional societal expectations, they usually hold more progressive marriage values, have higher standards for their relationships and face more challenges in mate selection. Although social media platforms, such as the RedNote provide new dating channels, they can hardly address Chinese women's marriage anxieties. Most interviewees find social media inefficient for finding partners. Initial responses decline over time due to platform algorithms, and relationships remain mostly online, with few progressing to offline meetings. The background of each candidate requires verification, as some candidates may provide false information. Exploring the phenomenon of ‘self-saving’ posts among Chinese female PhD students studying abroad helps shed light on their unique challenges in balancing individualistic values and societal expectations in mate selection.

My Digital Boyfriend: Exploring Women's Experience of Intimacy and Love in Chinese Women-oriented Games

Luna Yihan Fu, Xingyi Li, and Liying Mi, University of Leeds

Originating from Japan, Otome games are women-oriented romantic simulation games where players, as female protagonists, follow a romantic plot and date male characters through conversations and triggered storylines. Since 2017, the Chinese gaming market has begun localising and adapting Otome games to target Chinese heterosexual female players, leading to the emergence of a new genre of women-oriented games with distinct characteristics that have rapidly gained popularity in China. This study selects one of the top Chinese women-oriented games, Love and Deepspace (romance role-playing quest games), as a case to explore women's identity and experiences of being a girlfriend in the games. Our study aims to discuss how intimate heterosexual

relationships and norms are scripted in Chinese women-oriented games, and, furthermore, how women develop romantic relationships with male game characters and embody themselves as a girlfriend under these heteronormative gender scripts. This research conducted semi-structured interviews with women who spend regular time on Love and Deepspace. Specifically, we investigate their boyfriend bias, their romantic interactions, their preferred dating scenarios, their consumption experience, and their understandings of boyfriend preferences and connections in this game. By exploring this, we examine how the game constructs heteronormative and patriarchal intimate relationships and the illusion of empowerment and agency through in-game consumption of romantic experience. This study addresses the gap in mainstream research on intimacy by using a feminist perspective to explore women-oriented games as both gendered scripts and commodities that construct and shape women's understanding and experience of romantic relationships in contemporary China.

E0506 Utopia, Dystopia, Other Spaces and Mediated Language

Dreaming Together: Utopian Communes in pre-Communist China, 1919-1921

Shakhar Rahav, University of Haifa

This paper explores an often-overlooked moment in Chinese history when intellectual youths experimented with utopian communes between 1919 and 1921. In the wake of World War I and China's May Fourth Movement, these communal attempts aimed to establish a new social order and offered an alternative to the emerging mass-based party politics. Despite their brevity and limited participation, they were widely covered in the progressive press, influencing prominent figures like Mao Zedong and Shen Dingyi. I argue that these communal attempts provide a glimpse into radical imaginations of an alternative political and social order before party orthodoxies took hold and, that they should be viewed in a transnational context, as similar attempts appeared at roughly the same time in places as diverse as Japan, Palestine, and the Soviet Union. The paper traces the development of these communal attempts, from ideals to organization, and explores their causes, sources of inspiration, and everyday experiences. These grassroots organizations were loosely connected by social networks and the press, but had no central organization. Harboring moral and partiotic and universal aspirations, members strived to realize ideals in their immediate circumstances, while addressing practical problems they encountered. Many of them shared living quarters; most sought to combine study and work; although many valorized manual labor, they often gravitated toward other occupations. Espousing egalitarian ideals they largely remained confined to their original social circles; composed mostly of males, many were preoccupied with gender relations, and inspired female activists as well. Iconoclastic as they might seem, their activities often reveal an ambivalent relationship to traditional practices and spirituality. They thus illuminate the often contradictory experiences of radicals who sought an alternative social and political order before the consolidation of mass-political parties, and who inspired later experiments in China itself.

In search of Utopia: Li Rui's journey from Mao's servant to champion of democracy from the 1930s to the 2000s

Verna Yu, University of Oxford

This paper will examine the intellectual journey of Li Rui, Mao's former private secretary, as a case study of the so-called "democrats within the Communist Party" who in their later years lobbied the party to carry out democratic reforms. Li transformed from an idealistic student in search of Communist Utopia in the pre-1949 Republican era to a "tool of submission" in the Mao era (1949-1976), before emerging as the party's most high-profile advocate of democracy in the post-Mao era (1976-2000s). Drawing on his diaries, writings and interviews, this paper will investigate the internal and external pressures which motivated his intellectual transformation amid decades of political tumult and investigate how Li negotiated through the tensions between his liberal longings and Marxist-Leninist beliefs in his pursuit of a Communist utopia. It will examine the roles of ideology

and subjectivity in the CCP's thought reform regime and argue that Li and his generation of Chinese intellectuals were not passive victims in the CCP's ambitious socialist transformation programme but were active participants in their earnest desire to inscribe their lives into the larger revolutionary, national salvation cause to transform China into a utopia of democracy, freedoms and equality.

E0507 Between Worlds: Cultural Encounters in China's Borderlands [P,H]

This panel focuses on exploring the dynamic exchanges that have shaped cultural, religious, and intellectual landscapes in China's border regions. Through three distinct yet interconnected studies, we examine the fluidity of identities, beliefs, and knowledge transmission across ethnic and geopolitical boundaries. The first paper explores the Weining Miao of northwestern Guizhou, where indigenous belief systems have long coexisted with external religious influences, particularly Christianity. This study highlights the Duan Gong belief group, a Taoist-influenced tradition that travelled from Sichuan through Yunnan before being integrated into Miao religious practices with the Yi acting as intermediaries. By analysing historical texts and fieldwork data, this research uncovers the complexities of religious synthesis and emphasises the adaptability of local belief systems in response to cultural exchanges. The second paper examines how Qing-era perceptions of Japan changed in the aftermath of the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895). Initially viewed as a peripheral and often adversarial entity, Japan came to be recognised by Manchu intellectuals as a model for modernisation and reform. Through an analysis of writings by Manchu students who studied in Japan, this study reveals how the Qing's ideological and intellectual borders were redefined, reflecting broader shifts in sovereignty, civilisation, and identity in late imperial China. The third paper investigates the term "Molianzhe" in multi-lingual Buddhist scriptures, traditionally linked to Sanskrit *marica*- (pepper) but reinterpreted as "popcorn" through a comparative textual analysis. By tracing its translations in Tibetan and Sogdian manuscripts, this research sheds light on the linguistic and ritualistic transmission of Buddhist practices across diverse cultural contexts of China and its neighbouring civilisations. Together, these studies illuminate the permeability of borders—whether religious, political, or linguistic—demonstrating how interactions at China's frontiers have continually reshaped cultural landscapes.

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

Ziran Tang, SOAS University of London

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

Reimagining Borders: The Shifting Perception of Japan Among Late Qing Manchu Intellectuals

Elizabeth, Xiao Lin, SOAS University of London

Throughout the Qing dynasty, Japan was framed within a rigid geopolitical and cultural hierarchy. Early Qing discourse often referred to Japan as “倭” (wo), a term associated with piracy and foreign instability, reinforcing its status as an external and often hostile entity beyond the Qing’s Sino-centric order. This perception, deeply embedded in Qing official rhetoric and policy, positioned Japan as a peripheral state outside the imperial hierarchy. However, the collapse of this worldview was set in motion with the Qing’s defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), an event that forced a dramatic reconfiguration of how Qing intellectuals—particularly Manchu elites—understood the shifting regional order. This paper explores how the Qing’s ideological and physical borders were reimagined by Manchu students who travelled to Japan after the war. Drawing on sources which highlights how these students, once part of an empire that viewed Japan as an inferior outsider, began to see it as a model for national salvation. For these bannerment intellectuals, Japan was no longer an adversarial “倭” (wo) but a space of learning and reform, offering ideological and institutional frameworks for China’s own modernisation. This transition from exclusion to engagement reveals the fluidity of borders—not just territorial, but intellectual and ideological—as Qing scholars confronted the collapse of old hierarchies and sought new identities in a rapidly changing East Asia. By tracing this transformation, this paper argues that the shifting perception of Japan among Manchu intellectuals reflected a broader crisis in the Qing’s conception of sovereignty, civilisation, and identity. In the wake of war and defeat, the very notion of China’s borders—both real and imagined—became sites of negotiation, adaptation, and contestation.

Popcorn of the Sacred-Tracing Molianzhe in Buddhist Translations and Rituals**Nan Ni, SOAS University of London**

Molanzhe 摩練遮, a term that appears only once in the Taishō Tripiṭaka, is located in T. 1082, translated into Chinese by the Khotanese monk Śikṣānanda (652-710 A.D.). The meaning of this term has been the subject of scholarly debate, as it is recognised as a transcription from another language rather than a native Chinese word. Scholars have linked it with the Sanskrit word *marica-*. A Sogdian translation of T. 1082, found in the Dunhuang Manuscript Or. 8212 (158), translates the term as *mr’ynck’*. Previous scholarship has largely agreed on the etymology linking it to the Khotanese *mireṃjsya-*, derived from Sanskrit *marica-*, meaning pepper. This etymology is convincing given the resemblance to the Central Asian intermediate form. However, a thorough textual comparison reveals that in parallel texts of T. 1082, Molanzhe has an alternative Chinese translation indicating “popcorn.” This paper first reexamines the assumed etymology of Molanzhe, proposing its meaning as popcorn in Chinese Buddhist Canons, and traces its occurrences within these texts to elucidate its original appearance. Moreover, this study explores the term’s translations in Tibetan and Manchu texts, examining how translators from diverse cultural backgrounds interpreted it. The research further investigates Molanzhe’s role in Buddhist rituals, detailing its preparation, application, and ritualistic function. Additionally, the paper outlines the historical development of Molanzhe within Buddhist ritual practices across various cultures, tracing its origins, transmission among civilisations, and its preservation in contemporary Buddhist rituals.

E0508 Migration Policies and Wolf Warrior**The Descendants of Immigrants to China: The Lived Experiences and Negotiation of Identity****Chengzhi Zhang, University of Manchester**

Since the start of the Reform Era in the late 1970s, a growing number of foreigners have migrated to China and established their own families there. This led to the emergence a new generation of mixed-heritage and intercultural children with unique living and lived experiences. Consequently, these descendants of immigrants live, grow and immerse in an environment dominated by the Chinese, particularly the Han Chinese. For instance, they receive official curriculum designed to foster a unitary Chinese identity with respect to language and values; they may be institutionalised as a Chinese with their ID, passport and other paperwork, or they may be very familiar with Chinese

culture and traditions. Nevertheless, these descendants could be highly visible because of their appearance, and they may possess cultural inheritance which is very different from their Chinese counterparts. Therefore, their experiences in the Han Chinese-predominant environment influence how they identify themselves and how they are identified by others. This could be a significant process of dialogue, negotiation and perhaps conflicts between those descendants and the local Chinese communities. However, the mainstream academia primarily focuses on emigration from China to western countries or the entry of western and African immigrants into China, so there are very few studies on either the group of those descendants per se, nor their own experiences. This study thus explores the living/lived experiences and the identity formation of this special group.

Global Norm or ‘Protecting Compatriots’? China’s Policies of Migration Control in the 1930s
Yui Chim Lo, University of Manchester

The history of immigration control in Western Europe and settler societies in North America and elsewhere has captured scholarly attention. However, much less is known about the history of emigration control in the non-Western world. This paper examines the emigration control of China in the early 1930s, a pivotal moment in state-building and the development of migration policies in modern China (for instance building the statistical capacity to understand the Chinese diaspora). Contrary to the general impression that Republican China was an era rather open to migrants, this paper suggests that Nationalist China’s policies in the 1930s attempted to regulate or even limit certain kinds of migrant outflow, echoing late Qing and post-1949 policies. And contrary to the common argument that migrant control largely spread from white settler societies to the world in the early twentieth century, Chinese policymakers drew on both global norms and the nation-specific motive of ‘protecting compatriots’ in building emigration control. For example, China would self-limit emigration of labourers to protect more well-off migrants, learning from Japan, another non-Western country but also China’s arch-rival. Although internationalism was thought to be fading in the 1930s, Nationalist China demonstrated that one form of internationalism, where countries learned from each other’s practices, still existed. Unlike our current times when following global norms and sovereignty are often considered mutually exclusive, for non-Western nations back then participating in the global convergence of migration control was precisely a means to exercise sovereignty. But emigration control also reflects Nationalist China’s own understanding of international affairs. Its Overseas Compatriot Affairs Commission insisted on having the authority to issue passport to migrants, rivalling the Foreign Ministry’s power. Some Chinese policymakers regarded cross-border movements as part of diasporic affairs, rather than following global trends and placing it under the purview of diplomacy or domestic security.

Historical Foundations of Today’s “Wolf Warrior”: Reexplaining China’s Nationalist Diplomacy in the Xi Jinping Era Shaped by Confucianist Honour

Zhen Zhang, University of Edinburgh

This presentation addresses how the Chinese tradition of Confucianist honour formulates contemporary Chinese foreign policies from a constructivist perspective supported by historical evidence. The author intends to develop a cultural- and cognitive-oriented explanation to study the historical connection on the evolution of China’s diplomatic behaviours. In reviewing the extant literature regarding in international relations (IR) and foreign policy analysis (FPA), the author transpires that the following challenges hinder further development of researches on Chinese IR: i) the apparent lack of accuracy towards offensive and defensive realists to locate the China’s geopolitical motivations and following actions; ii) the relative inability of realists to explain why ‘emotional’ factors frequently led the Chinese state’s hawkish responses toward even very tiny cultural disputes, rather than pursuing their economic interests ‘rationally’; and iii) the need for constructivists to reveal historical processes of how specific values and ideologies participate into the shaping of China’s foreign policy. Taking the Xi Jinping administration’s nationalist diplomacy, which is also known as ‘Wolf Warrior Diplomacy’ (zhanlang wajiao) as a representative case, this

presentation attends to overcome the above theoretical limitations through advancing a constructivist approach to reexplain China's foreign policymaking mechanism. The author argues that Confucianist honour ideologically shapes China's understanding and pricing of national interest in handling its international relations. To further examine this argument, the author aims to identify conditions responsible for the Chinese concept of its national honour and define their role in forming China's nationalist diplomacy in the Xi Jinping era. Drawing on relevant historical materials, this presentation concentrates on the Chinese tradition of interpreting and defending its honour, which is currently reshaped by China's political elites, civil society, and the Chinese nation's interactions with its neighbours in the Indo-Pacific as well as major great powers on a global scale.

Exploring views on Chinese "Wolf Warrior Diplomacy" through X posts (2019-2024)

Liane Marques Ferreira, University of Lisbon

In recent years, China's foreign policy has taken a turn with the rise of wolf warrior diplomacy, a more assertive and confrontational diplomatic style that actively defends China's national interests against foreign criticism. This proactive approach takes advantage of social media platforms, such as X, generating intense public discussions. From this starting point, this paper investigates public discourse on X and questions what image/sentiment is associated with wolf warrior diplomacy and how it might reflect on China's image in global social media discourse. This paper argues that this diplomatic line can contribute to the polarization of international public opinion regarding China's foreign policy and global rise. Methodologically, this study conducts a content analysis of X discussions on the concept of wolf warrior diplomacy. X was chosen as the platform to study due to its role as a tool for public diplomacy. X publications, from 2019 to May 2024, were retrieved using NodeXL and analysed using the same software. The temporal trends of tweets, the most used hashtags, the sentiment expressed, and common word pairs were also studied. This paper aims to contribute to the research on wolf warrior diplomacy and how it is perceived online. Its academic significance lies in exploring the intersection of social media, a key arena for international actors, and Chinese foreign diplomacy.

E0509 Women and Gendered Representation in Chinese Culture: Myth, Literature and Society

Flow as Genre: Liu, Fixed Tropes, and Transcultural Lexicon in Chinese Internet Literature

Xinyue Zhang, University of Hong Kong

The Chinese character 流 (liu), usually translated as flow or stream, illustrates continuous movement, metaphorizing water. While it typically signifies a sense of fluidity, flow can also denote fixed phenomena, particularly in Chinese Internet literature. By 2024, China boasted 36 million online novels and 520 million users, with genre fiction that follows established conventions dominating the landscape. Within grassroots creator culture, frequently imitated plots become tropes, and series of tropes evolve into genres, referred to as "xx flow" in cyber-slang. This paper examines the 无限流 (Infinite Flow) genre, noted for its earliest use of the suffix. Originating from Zhttty's work *Infinite Horror* (2007), this genre features protagonists traveling to various storyworlds to complete missions, whereas "Infinite" suggests endless adventures and unlimited plot settings. Through textual analysis, I argue that such an expansive yet linear narrative mirrors an inexhaustible river, constantly flowing with twists and turns. Moreover, when the arbitrary and culturally specific naming of Chinese Internet literature causes many "xx flows" to lose the suffix in translation, only "无限流" retains "flow" in English, emphasizing its integration with the imagery of flow in the storytelling and its embodiment of both the openness and convergence of flow in literature. Finally, by exploring the transcultural communication of the lexicon of liu in Chinese as a literary suffix, I will demonstrate the initial influence of Japanese ACG subculture on Chinese Internet culture (i.e., "xx 流 (ryu)" is a common Japanese phrase, while Chinese tradition would go with "xx 派") and the dynamics between cultural capital and class distinction in the Bourdieu sense, as exemplified by

popular culture (“流” 行文化) where popular is seen as lowbrow and highbrow literature is typified by “stream of consciousness” (意识流).

Rethinking Social Precarity of Chinese Rural Migrant Workers in the Pearl River Delta Region **Zhiwei Huang, University College London**

China’s urban-prioritised and state-led development mode has resulted in a stark urban-rural dichotomy, marked by large-scale urban expansion, which has prompted significant rural-to-urban migration, particularly among peasants seeking better economic opportunities. Most of these migrants, however, are confined to low-wage and unskilled employment in construction, manufacturing, and other informal sectors. Their experiences are often portrayed through narratives of socio-economic marginalisation and precarity. Despite a series of state-led institutional reforms--most notably the Hukou system reform--designed to integrate migrants into urban life, these interventions have had limited success in improving their material conditions. This paper argues that migrant workers are embedded in deeply imbalanced labour-capital relations, which perpetuate their precarity and hinder efforts to reduce their exclusion. Drawing on Michael Burawoy’s theoretical framework of Manufacturing Consent, this research posits that skewed labour relations and economic disadvantages generate a ‘manufactured consent’ among migrant workers, manifesting in their acquiescence of overtime work, high labour intensity, and job instability. Trapped in the exploitation from employers and labour intermediaries, Chinese rural migrant workers are instigated to pursue short-term economic benefits while ignored long-term stable work and living security. While it may be easy to blame the state for sustaining institutional barriers, my empirical research in China’s Pearl River Delta highlights a more intricate reality. Labour dispatch agencies, in collaboration with employers, play a crucial role in exacerbating the precarious conditions faced by migrant workers and further erode the effectiveness of institutional reforms.

Flying Devas as a Co-creation: Tracing Multicultural Influences in Northern Wei Grottoes **Xueyu Wen, Ghent University**

The Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534AD) was a dynasty established by the Xianbei, a nomadic ethnic minority in northern medieval China. During this period, the imperial court introduced and established many new sociocultural conventions and policies, and significant efforts were made to promote the flourishing of Buddhism in China. Many imperial court-sponsored grottoes, such as the Yungang Grottoes, Longmen Grottoes, and Gongyi Grottoes, were excavated during this time. The emperors of the Northern Wei Dynasty forcibly moved a large number of people, including craftsmen and artists, as well as property from the economically and culturally developed areas of China (such as Hebei, Shandong, etc.) and the Western Regions where Buddhism had been prevalent for a long time (such as the kingdoms of Shanshan, Kucha, Khotan, etc.) to the capital. In the grottoes mentioned above, flying devas/deities (generally subsumed under the term *feitian* 飛天 in Chinese sources)—originally a Buddhist motif from India—were frequently depicted, showing remarkable diversity in their artistic forms. These representations reflect a rich process of cultural integration and cross-fertilization, blending influences from various traditions. In this study, I will focus on the representation of cultural diversity in the aforementioned grottoes during the Northern Wei Dynasty. Specifically, I will reveal how the Xianbei culture, the Western Regions culture, and the Central Plains culture jointly created the new style of flying devas from layout to appearance in the aforementioned grottoes.

From Fox to Human Being: Identity Transformation of Female Yao in Liaozhai Zhiyi **Ang Li, University of Stirling**

The concept of yao has existed for thousands of years in Chinese historical records and literary works, although its meaning has always been elusive. This research explores the definition of yao and the image of female yao in late imperial Chinese literature by examining Lian Xiang (蓮香/Miss Lien-Hsiang), a tale depicting huyao (狐妖/fox monster) from Liaozhai Zhiyi (聊齋志異/Strange

Stories from a Chinese Studio), a collection of classic Chinese novels written by Pu Songling during the Ming-Qing transitional period (1662-1714).

The depictions of the fox, which is regarded as a mysterious and monstrous feature, have appeared in Chinese literary works since the Warring States Period (c. 475–221 BC), extensively developed in Tang chuanqi narratives, and reached its peak during the Ming-Qing dynasties. Like his predecessors, Pu preserves some monstrous features of foxes in his tales, such as their habitat and extraordinary abilities. However, Pu is not satisfied with merely mimicking the narrative tradition regarding fox and yao; instead, Pu embeds his philosophical thinking and political ambitions in this tale, especially the process of Lian Xiang's identity transformation, from yao to a human being. To undertake an in-depth analysis of yao in the Liaozhai world, I will utilise the tianxia (天下/All under Heaven) system, a fundamental philosophy for understanding late imperial Chinese society and literary works, to provide a working definition of yao in the Liaozhai world and summarise their main characteristics. Within the framework of tianxia, power dynamics and marriage system within will be utilised to analyse the reasons and process of Lian Xiang's identity transformation, from marginal to be incorporated into the Confucian Chinese society.

F0602 The Contemporary Chinese Popular Culture in Cross-cultural Mobility

Fantasies of Heterotopia: The Wandering Earth's Chinese Nostalgia and Life Narrative

Qiunuo Hu, University of Exeter

Michel Foucault's theory of heterotopia uses utopia as a reference to establish an alternative reality of existential relationships and heterotopic spaces (other space), showing the critical role of heterotopia in space through difference and inclusivity. Science fiction (sf) film takes human society as a template and reconstructs human society based on human fantasies, thus making it a heterotopia expression and completing the diversity of narratives. Taking the Chinese sf film *The Wandering Earth* as a sample, this research analyses the film's Chinese life narrative concept and nostalgia from a heterotopia perspective. The heterotopic space constructed by *The Wandering Earth* completes a profound Hollywood narrative from an Eastern perspective. It argues for the cultural, spatial, and narrative capacities of heterotopic spaces in sf films. Meanwhile, the narrative space and cinematic connotations produced by sf films in different social contexts can produce new understandings of heterotopia. By placing heterotopia in sf films with Chinese characteristics, the resistance and transcendence of the real society expressed in *The Wandering Earth* have understood in terms of heterotopia's criticality and inclusiveness. Through the perspective of heterotopia analysis, interpreting the cultural concepts and ideologies shown in *The Wandering Earth*. This research will be the new perspective that heterotopia can bring to *The Wandering Earth* and provide a differentiated and inclusive perspective on the analysis of sf films.

Jiuzhou: An Oriental Fantasy World in Cross-Cultural Mobility

Jiayin Yang, University of Freiburg

The rise of fantasy literature by authors such as J.R.R. Tolkien and George R.R. Martin has gained worldwide popularity, becoming a hot topic in literary studies and promoting cross-cultural creative exchanges. In response to this landscape, in 2003, a collective of Chinese authors proposed creating an 'oriental fantasy world' to advance Chinese fantasy literature. They named the world 'Jiuzhou' (Novoland) and developed it as a shared worldview setting for various narratives, contributing to the rise of *Fantasy World* magazine. This ambitious project, influential in Chinese fantasy literature, is both a landmark in the genre and a collective literary experiment shaped by cross-cultural exchanges. Therefore, this study focuses on the most influential work within the Jiuzhou system, *Novoland* and *Eagle Flag*, while also considering other Jiuzhou texts. From a cross-cultural perspective, it examines how Jiuzhou's fantasy narrative interacts between global fantasy literature and local Chinese cultural resources, and influences the fantasy literature later. Specifically, this study will compare Jiuzhou and English fantasy in the aspect of worldbuilding and narrative mode, analysing their difference and their inner relation. Meanwhile, this study will consider the influence of games

and popular culture in the 1990s. In this exploration of the oriental fantasy world --- Jiuzhou, these writers construct a complete worldview setting in a series of fiction through combining Chinese geographical realities with local fantasy traditions, martial arts, strange tales, and historical narratives. Moreover, the incorporation of Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism enriches its philosophical framework. This study further examines Jiuzhou in the context of contemporary society. In response to the modern social changes within globalisation, Jiuzhou has reshaped readers' and writers' perceptions of the fantasy world while providing a localised model for Chinese fantasy literature. As a result, it built a new link between the traditional and the modern, the global and the local.

Weird Fiction and Chinese web Science Fiction *Lord of the Mysteries* (诡秘之主): Connections, Influences, and Innovations

Weiming Gao, University of Freiburg

Chinese web Science Fiction (SF) is one of the most cutting-edge forms of contemporary Chinese SF and *Lord of the Mysteries* (诡秘之主) by Cuttlefish That Loves Diving is one of its most representative works. This novel uses elements of the Cthulhu Mythos and steampunk as the backdrop for its world-building, telling the story of the protagonist becoming a god in a mysterious and twisted mad world. Weird Fiction is generally considered a genre that focuses on the undermining of the quotidian. The recently popular new weird genre mixes characteristics of SF and fantasy, often based on modern urban realities. *Lord of the Mysteries* features traits of both old weird fictions, represented by the Cthulhu Mythos, and new weird fiction, represented by the SCP Foundation. This paper will analyze the gods, supernatural powers, and magical items in *Lord of the Mysteries*, comparing them with old and new weird fiction to highlight their intrinsic connections and mutual influences. As a web fiction, *Lord of the Mysteries* also incorporates the unique "leveling up" narrative (升级叙事) of Chinese web novels, it not only localized weird fiction narratives but also successfully transformed and innovated the anti-humanist core of weird fiction to point towards coexistence and symbiosis, blending post-humanist characteristics. By examining *Lord of the Mysteries* from the perspective of weird fiction, this paper aims to provide further understanding of the dialogism between contemporary Chinese and global SF.

'The Eternal Flow of Rivers Through the Ages': Centred on Changleyi: The Golden Age as I Desire Jiangfeng Hu and Xi Yang, Capital Normal University

As an atypical web novel, Xiao Qixiao's *Changleyi: The Golden Age as I Desire* (长乐里：盛世如我愿) has garnered widespread acclaim since its publication, emerging as one of the most decorated works in Chinese internet literature to date. While inheriting and advancing the realist tradition, the novel integrates Chinese spiritual traditions with modern culture, blending literary genres such as time-travel, spy fiction, mystery, detective fiction, romance, and heroic legends from both Eastern and Western traditions. It features unique characteristics—subtle time-travel elements, strong realist foundations, restrained catharsis, and profound empathy—pioneering a new path for internet literature that harmonizes Chinese and Western aesthetics. The success of *Changleyi: The Golden Age as I Desire* exemplifies the achievements of China's new popular literature and art, demonstrating the capacity of Chinese internet literature to narrate compelling Chinese stories. Like the eternal rivers, it embraces inclusivity, flows ceaselessly, and leaves behind vivid, richly layered narratives that forge new cultural frontiers.

F0603 Digital China

Propaganda Posters for a New Era? Expanding genres and aesthetics in the digital PRC

Benjamin Davies, Lund University

The genre "poster" feels intuitive. Some illustration and text, on a piece of paper, hung up on a wall. For modern China scholars, even the more specific genre "propaganda poster" is readily

understandable. Fed with countless examples, from the bold strokes of Mao-era *haibao* to the cutesy aesthetic of contemporary *gongyi guanggao*, we recognise posters wherever we see them. This study explores the treachery of such “intuitive” categories by asking what contemporary Chinese Communist Party (CCP) propaganda posters *actually* constitute. This is achieved through a review of the literature and a content analysis of a novel dataset of tens of thousands of contemporary posters from the period 2012–2024. (A historical comparison corpus of several thousand older posters is also utilised). From previous studies and CCP-internal poster-design discourses, a history of the propaganda poster as genre is given. Particular attention is paid to the possible need to distinguish propaganda posters from the likes of “advertising” and “public service advertising”. Then, the dataset and historical corpus are used to compare content trends, noting both the persistence of certain content and the emergence of completely new types (with a particular emphasis on humour and irony) in the contemporary posters. This comparison shows that received wisdom about propaganda periods is not always borne out by the data. Finally, the posters’ complex physical-digital duality is considered. Can the rigidity of posters survive in an age in which the seeming limitlessness and flexibility of digital space threaten to melt media boundaries? The theoretical implications of the study are considered in particular relation to debates about “hard v. soft” propaganda, positive propaganda, and the equivalence (or lack thereof) between the concepts of “propaganda” and *xuanchuan*.

From Disenchantment to Qu Mei: Re-Enchantment on Xiaohongshu’s Algorithmic Life

Xiaoyu Pu, Kingston University

While China was at the forefront of media revolutions, namely pioneering print and navigation technology, these innovations were eventually curbed in favour of the “imperial examination system” aligned with Confucian ethics. In contemporary China, a strong drive towards technological innovation gave rise to a culture-specific media environment. This paper seeks to interrogate the dialectic of disenchantment and re-enchantment among Xiaohongshu users to engage the broader question of China’s ambivalent relation to technological innovation. The paper examines the phenomenon of Qu Mei on Xiaohongshu, not as a nostalgic return to tradition but as a distinctly digital trend that departs from the Weberian notion of disenchantment. On the platform, Qu Mei operates in two ways: as a form of subtle social critique and as a way of seeking comfort when structural realities cannot be changed. Over time, it becomes embedded in users’ ongoing processes of self-cultivation, yet its spread is also shaped by algorithms that privilege widely resonant content. In this way, Qu Mei transforms into a mode of re-enchantment, an aesthetic and ethical sensibility that can be monetised while still offering participants a sense of meaning in the secular, networked world.

Negotiating a Less Unsettling Past: Official Memory in the Chinese COVID-19 Digital Museum

Liangzuo Hao, Loughborough University

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 centres 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.

Study of prosody in Chinese classical poetry from a perspective of digital humanities

Gary Tsang, Hong Kong Metropolitan University

Chinese classical poetry places great emphasis on prosody, with poets adhering to strict rules regarding the number of characters, syntax, tonal patterns, and rhyme schemes. These elements are essential characteristics of the poetic form. However, the domain knowledge required can be challenging for students and even more difficult for researchers who are not native Chinese speakers. In fact, the prosodic features of poetry are not merely formal requirements; they are closely related to the musicality and expressiveness of the poems themselves. The use and rules of prosody have evolved over time, reflecting the poetic trends of different eras, making it a crucial material for the study of classical literature. In recent years, the development of digital humanities has led to the emergence of databases with prosodic annotation functions. These tools facilitate the verification of prosodic patterns and the appreciation of the beauty of poetry, thereby enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. My presentation will introduce and review significant research achievements in digital humanities and Chinese classical prosody over the past two decades. I'm holding a research project, and have also developed a database to analyze the relationship between prosody and expressiveness in Ci poetry of the Song dynasty. This research examines how Ci poets utilized tonal patterns and rhyming schemes to enhance the emotional expression in their works. Using the database I developed as a case study, I will analyze the relationship between prosody and expressiveness in Ci poetry, discussing the implications of digital humanities for the teaching and research of poetic prosody. This paper argues that employing digital methods to study poetic prosody will revolutionize traditional paradigms of prosodic research, making substantial contributions to the teaching and research in this field.

This research is a preliminary result of the research project. (Ref no. UGC/FDS16/H34/24)

F0604 The Aesthetics of a Political Medium: Intersections of Visual Culture and Literature in Chinese Comics [P]

This panel investigates how the aesthetic qualities of *lianhuanhua* shape and are shaped by their content and context. By focusing on the artistic dimensions—stylistic choices, narrative techniques, visual symbolism, and text-image relationships—we will uncover how aesthetics serves not merely as a vessel for political messages but as an active force in shaping political perceptions and social consciousness: How do the artistic conventions of *lianhuanhua* influence their interpretation? In what ways do visual storytelling and graphic design elements contribute to or undermine official narratives? How did (alleged) historical watersheds impact on aesthetic conventions and their political and social implications? Addressing these questions, this panel proposes a chronological exploration of the aesthetics of *lianhuanhua* during the 20th century. First, Norbert Danysz takes Chen Guangyi's works from before and after 1949 as examples of the shifting aesthetics that were introduced into *lianhuanhua* by the CCP and its propagandistic views on comics. Next, Astrid Xiao focuses on children's *lianhuanhua* produced during the Cultural Revolution period, discussing how the CCP set exemplary figures visually in these comics to influence young readers' perceptions. Nick Stember reveals visual quotes from early-1960s cartoons in a popular late-1970s science fiction comic, highlighting how nostalgia, politics, and satire coexist in *lianhuanhua* following the Mao era. Aijia Zhang uses computational approaches to explore the general depiction of females in *lianhuanhua* with a 20th-century setting represented by their voices and images. The panel's four presentations thus offer deeper insights into the power of visual media in shaping ideologies and cultural narratives within China's complex socio-political landscape.

Chen Guangyi, or the shifting aesthetics of *lianhuanhua* around 1949

Norbert Danysz, Institut d'Asie Orientale, Université Lumière Lyon and Interactions, Transfers, and Artistic and Cultural Ruptures (INTRU) research unit at the Université de Tours

A member of the “Four Great Names” of *lianhuanhua* in the 1930s and 1940s, illustrator Chen Guangyi (1915-1991) is the author of over 150 works in Republican China. His prolific career spans across the 20th century and thus serves as an appropriate lens to analyze the shifting aesthetics in Chinese comics. Various works by Chen Guangyi, ranging from 1939 to 1980, show that the 1949 landmark acts as a separation between two main styles. In the first period, Chen’s comics leave behind the techniques and aspects of the earliest *lianhuanhua* published in the 1920s, as they lean less towards the opera stage and more towards cinematographic representation. Their use of sequentiality and curvy contour lines also suggests links with the vibrant *manhua* and cartoon scene of the same period. After 1949, the transformations in *lianhuanhua* aesthetics make room for more clarity and realism, in connection with the CCP’s motivations to use comics as propaganda. The new relationship between text and image, more rational and systematic than pre-1949 works, can also be linked to the reorganization of the artists’ working conditions (from old-school workshops to state-owned studios) and to the emergence of a new type of profession handling the *lianhuanhua*’s written components. Eventually, this paper argues that the dynamization of *lianhuanhua* aesthetics in the 1930s made it an attractive medium and paved the way for its instrumentalization—even if, in light of Chen’s stylistic evolution, the official aesthetics that were imposed after 1949 proved to be less dynamic in the end.

Force of examples: Children’s *lianhuanhua* from the Cultural Revolution period

Astrid Xiao, Heidelberg University

Since 1949 and as a widely accessible form of visual literature and media, *lianhuanhua* has been regarded by the Chinese Communist Party as a useful tool for nation-building and reshaping youth. This paper focuses on *lianhuanhua* from the Cultural Revolution period featuring children as protagonists, exploring how *lianhuanhua*, through its combined aesthetic of text and images, establishes exemplary figures, promotes policies, and disseminates communist ideologies among young people, thereby fostering their political identities. Primarily drawing on John Stephens’ theories of readers and subject positions in children’s fiction, this paper analyses how the CCP during the Cultural Revolution depicted ideal children as subjects (protagonists) to manipulate the real child readers in establishing ideological notions and personalities. The paper aims to address the following questions: How do *lianhuanhua* texts and visual designs shape typical characters to influence young readers’ perceptions? In the formulaic narratives of “discovering a crisis - resolving the crisis - raising the hero”, how do illustrators visualize the stories and embed specific values and messages into children’s tales? Eventually, this paper argues that the CCP intended to shape young audiences’ attitudes into “desirable” forms through the force of examples by designing child heroes who continue the legacy of adult heroes.

Hiding in Plain Sight: Huang Yongyu’s Satirical Animal Cartoons in a 1980 *Lianhuanhua* Adaptation of Little Smarty Visits the Future

Nick Stember, National Museum of Denmark

In this paper I will be considering repeated references to Huang Yongyu’s satirical animal fable *manhua* (cartoons) from the early 1970s which were included in a 1980 *lianhuanhua* adaptation of Ye Yonglie’s influential children’s story, *Little Smarty Visits the Future*, illustrated by Du Jianguo together with Mao Yongkun. These references are both diegetic (appearing in the form of a painting used for interior decoration), and extra-diegetic (the echoing of an infamous visual motif in a scene from a fictitious film). In so doing, my objective is to explore the layers of historical meaning embedded within a seemingly straightforward adaptation. I will be arguing that rather than being extraneous to the original text, rather, the heterogeneous inclusion of satirical political commentary from the mid-Cultural Revolution is entirely appropriate when the publication history Ye’s original

story is taken into consideration. Published in 1978, Ye had completed his first draft of the story in the early 1960s, drawing inspiration from the heady technological optimism of Great Leap Forward. A close reading of both texts, therefore, not only uncovers explicit allusions to (and implicit criticisms of) key Maoist political campaigns, but more importantly reveals the late 1970s and early 1980s to be site of nostalgic rediscovery and tongue-in-check play.

Shaping the New Socialist Woman: Gender and Voice in *Lianhuanhua*

Aijia Zhang, Heidelberg University

Combining text and images, drawing on sources from folklore to literary works, *lianhuanhua* entertained and educated its audience and served as a state-sponsored tool for propagating socialist ideology and shaping collective identities. This paper examines how *lianhuanhua* constructed gendered subjectivities through the voices of female characters in the 20th-century setting, especially after 1949, focusing on their dialogues and monologues. These voices reflect women's actions and interactions, revealing how *lianhuanhua* navigated and negotiated gender ideals. Considering the interplay between text and imagery, the study examines recurring themes and archetypes by analyzing the language they use and the topics they engage with. It also illustrates how these roles were visually represented and evolved. Juxtaposing the voices and appearances of these female characters, this study argues that *lianhuanhua* presented a complex image of the new socialist women, balancing traditional domestic roles with novel public identities encouraged under socialist ideology. Using computational tools and large language models, this study analyzes over 300 *lianhuanhua* volumes adapted from 20th-century literary works and stories, aiming to capture a broad spectrum of female character portrayals and to represent its evolvement. It identifies linguistic and thematic patterns in female characters' voices and examines their visual depictions to provide prototypical representations of key archetypes. Representative stories and iconic female figures are explored to illustrate how femininity was shaped, reinforced, and sometimes contested within the medium. By situating these findings at the intersection of voice, gender, and visual storytelling, this study highlights the sociopolitical resonance of *lianhuanhua* as a cultural product. It reveals how the medium both propagated and mediated state-defined ideals of femininity, offering a composite image of the new socialist women who, in addition to "upholding half the sky" of the society, also pillared the roof in the domestic sphere.

F0605 Rituals, Traditions and Social Practices

Disruption of Tradition Through the Reconceptualisation of *geren* (Individual): New Interpretation of the "Chinese vs. Western" Cultural Debate in Early 20th Century China

Weiyu Yuan, Durham University

This paper provides a new perspective in interpreting the 1910s debate between Western and Chinese culture among Chinese intelligentsia. Through a corpus-based discourse analysis of the articles published mainly on *La Jeunesse* and *The Eastern Miscellany*, this paper investigates how the intellectuals in the debate reconceptualised *geren* (个人) in various hybrid forms of new knowledge evolved from both the Enlightenment values and Chinese classical readings. It argues from a conceptual historical perspective that the debate reflects modern China's recalibration of liberal individualism through the destruction of the Chinese traditional idea of *xiushen* (修身).

Regarding the recognition of self, the modern value of liberal individualism promotes the liberation of the individual from social constraints, whereas in the traditional worldview of China, familial and social interconnectedness are treated as the core of self-realisation. *Geren*, a loaned phrase from modern Japan that primarily adopts the modern Western concept of "liberal individual", is one of the most frequently articulated concepts during the cultural debate. Although standing at the crossroads between tradition and modernity, the intellectuals at the time of the debate were not fighting for China's modernisation but in desperate need of national survival. Therefore, no matter whether the intellectuals promoted wholesale westernisation or harmonisation between the two constellations of values, they struggled to adopt the idea of liberal individualism in their recalibration

of *geren*. More importantly, regardless of the extent of Western modern values they incorporated, these intellectuals unconsciously sabotaged the social interconnectedness that is emphasised by the holistic idea of *shen* (身) in various ways. By reflecting on the underlying assumptions in the intellectuals' arguments, this paper intends to shed light on the implementation of modernity values in a non-Western cultural context.

The Decline of the Concept of Humbling Dwelling: A Modern Transformation

Yuwen Zhang, KU Leuven

Originated in the pre-Qin period, the concept of humbling palaces and residence (卑宫室), rooted in Confucian ideals of moderation and frugality, persisted in China for over two thousand years under the influence of Confucian ideology, maintaining significant impact up to the Qing dynasty. In the late Qing era, confronted with Western modernity, internal reflections and critiques emerged within Confucianism regarding attitudes toward frugality. Political and intellectual leader Kang Youwei (康有为) directly criticized the phenomenon of humble palaces. Subsequently, the idea of humbling palace and residence became rare in mainstream discourse, replaced by an affirmation and pursuit of grand architecture. This shift is evident in nationalist and communist architecture, and continues in contemporary China, where large-scale projects and constructions are still highly regarded. This article aims to explore the cultural shift in modern China regarding the concept of humbling palaces and residence by tracing Kang Youwei's thoughts and historical context, conducting textual analysis of his works to examine his understanding and critique of this idea. It argues that, perhaps unintentionally, Kang launched a comprehensive attack on the concept of humbling palace and residence, by respectively criticizing the phenomenon of humbling dwellings, the value logic supporting this concept, and the orthodox Confucian system underpinning it, thereby demonstrating his significant role in the modernization of Chinese architectural understanding.

Daigou as a Social Practice

Yao Xu, University of Leicester

This study explores the practices of *daigou*, a form of cross-border shopping conducted by overseas Chinese who purchase goods abroad to sell in China. Through participant observation of six *daigou* specializing in different products (e.g., duty-free goods, luxury items, baby formula, outlets products, sample sales and sneakers), this paper engages critically with the theory of practice. It reveals the interplay of social capital, cultural capital and trust in shaping *daigou* practices. Key findings highlight the importance of social networks, trust-building, and mobility in facilitating *daigou*. *Daigou* use their social relationships to access resources, reduce costs, and expand their customer base. Cultural capital, acquired through experience and knowledge of products, enables *daigou* to act as cultural intermediaries, bridging consumer preferences and market trends. Economic capital, often sourced from family or personal savings, supports initial investments and scaling of operations. The study also emphasizes the role of transportation, material packing and strategic planning in optimizing *daigou* practice. Additionally, *daigou* practices involve navigating risks and ethical boundaries, such as exploiting loopholes in shopping policies.

F0606 Modernities, Modernism and Modern China

Negotiating Modernities: The Tracksuit and Power in Globalising China (1980s–Present)

Keyi Zhang, University of Arts London

What does the tracksuit reveal about constructions of Chinese modernity? This garment gained popularity in the People's Republic of China after its 'Reform and Opening-Up' policy in 1979 and has since been adopted as a unique style of Chinese school uniform. As a dress phenomenon, the tracksuit represents both China's engagement with global culture and the surveillance of the authorities, yet it has rarely been discussed in the studies on modernity in China. This paper interrogates the existing studies by exploring tracksuits in the 1980s and the tracksuit uniform from the 1990s to the present. Using methods of analysing the textual and visual representations of the

tracksuit in Chinese official magazines and newspapers documented in the Chinese National Library. Drawing from 'colonial modernity (Barlow 1997)' and global perspectives on modernity and the theory of biopolitics, I explore the biopolitics imposed by authorities, thus identifying the characteristics of modernity at its intersection with fashion in China. I argue that, as the representative garment in the Olympics, the tracksuit embodied the new nationalist narrative in China, emerging with China's return to the Olympic Games. Such nationalism is a response to globalisation and modernisation in the post-reform period (Duara 2010). Tracksuit uniform, along with a series of school regulations surrounding it, serves as a means to impose this new narrative on students.

British Cataloguing and Classification of Yuan *Zaju*: a Comparative Bibliographical Perspective on the Modern Transformation of Chinese Literature

Jing Tan, Xi'an Jiaotong University

Between 1823 and 1915, a series of catalogues and supplementary catalogues documenting Chinese books in British collections were compiled by British sinologists, missionaries, aristocrats, national public libraries, and unofficial societies. The catalogued plays related to Yuan *zaju* are predominantly drawn from the *Yuanqu xuan* (元曲選 *Selection of Yuan Plays*) and *Xixiang ji* (西廂記 *The Romance of the Western Chamber*), with most editions originating from the Ming and Qing dynasties. These catalogues illustrate how Chinese literary works were integrated into the modern European literary classification system. From the mid-19th century onward, the British bibliographic system of Chinese books began incorporating elements of traditional Chinese bibliography, particularly the *sibu fenlei* (四部分類 *Four Branches Classification System*). In traditional Chinese classification, Yuan *zaju* was excluded from the orthodox literary canon. However, in the British cataloguing system, the literary status of Yuan *zaju* was elevated, and through the synthesis of British and Chinese systems, it was explicitly placed within the *jibu* (集部 *literature section*), affirming its position in the history of Chinese literature. Grounded in an analysis of existing bibliographies and catalogues, this article reveals the complex and uneven "modern" transformation of Chinese literature, highlighting the tension between tradition and modernity in its evolving classification and reception.

'The English Bourgeois Revolution' as a Political Discourse in Modern China

Li Hu, Beijing Normal University

In China, 'The English Bourgeois Revolution' is a widely accepted interpretation of the seventeenth-century English Revolution. It was influential among intellectuals and political elites in the early twentieth century and remains part of history textbooks today. Although the term 'the English Bourgeois Revolution' is not widely accepted in academic circles, it was constructed as a political discourse in the first half of the twentieth century to support China's revolutionary agenda. This article examines the formation and evolution of this discourse and analyses the two contrasting images constructed by different political factions. The article is divided into four parts. The first section traces how the seventeenth-century English political events were regarded as a 'revolution'—a new term introduced by Qi Chao Liang in the early 20th century. The second part examines how, in the context of the revolution led by Sun Yat-sen, the English Revolution came to be understood as a civil rights or democratic revolution. The third part explores the crucial stage in the formation of 'the English Bourgeois Revolution' as a political discourse, focusing on the influence of Marxist publications. The final section compares the two contrasting images of 'the English Bourgeois Revolution' constructed by Sun Yat-sen and Marxism followers and discusses their effects. The article argues that the English Revolution of the seventeenth century was interpreted to serve the progress of the Chinese revolution in the early twentieth century. Although it was transformed into a political discourse, it still reflects a significant interaction between Western and Chinese political civilizations, leaving a profound mark on the modern political history of China.

Toy Flânerie: Exploring Xi Xi's Modernist Engagement with Toys

CT (Chung-to) Au, University of Hong Kong

Xi Xi (1937-2022) was a prolific modernist poet and novelist from Hong Kong whose depictions of flânerie and the flâneur set her works apart in the modernist tradition. Her interpretation of the flâneur resonates with Baudelaire's concepts while suggesting innovative approaches for engaging with flânerie—what I term “toy flânerie” —in the postmodern world. Flânerie gained prominence through Walter Benjamin's analysis of Baudelaire's literary works. Although Benjamin, along with Wolfgang Schivelbusch and Robert Musil, suggested that the flâneur would gradually vanish in the postmodern era, Mike Featherstone posited the emergence of an electronic flâneur. However, the flânerie depicted in Xi Xi's writings hints at another possibility. In his essay “A Philosophy of Toys,” Baudelaire expresses his enjoyment of window shopping at toy stores, particularly captivated by dollhouses that sparked his imagination. Xi Xi similarly embraced flânerie, inspired by her doctor's suggestion, and expressed a fondness for window shopping at toy stores. During her walks, Xi Xi purchased toys, especially dollhouses, and sewed teddy bears at home. She also explored various facets of flânerie through her essays and fiction. In her essay collection *My Toys (Wo de wanju)*, Xi Xi conveys a sentiment akin to Baudelaire's, finding joy in visiting toy stores. Her fiction, *My Georgian (Wo de qiaozhiya)*, emphasizes flânerie within English history through the construction of a George Dollhouse. Additionally, *The Teddy Bear Chronicles (Feng xiong zhi)* deepens the concept of flânerie by transforming teddy bears into significant historical figures from Chinese history. This study will examine the relationship between toys and flânerie in Xi Xi's works. By doing so, we can better understand how Xi Xi reinterprets the flâneur and reflects the complexities of contemporary life. Ultimately, this analysis aims to deepen our understanding of modernism and highlight the lasting relevance of Xi Xi's literary contributions.

F0607 Nation, Transnational Exchange and Trade**From *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* to *Word of Honor*: Wuxia as a cross-cultural bridge**

Maria Szafrńska-Chmielarz, University of Warsaw

The term ‘wuxia’, although now widely associated with Chinese culture, was initially coined from Japanese, used to describe *Bukyo no Nihon* (published in 1902 as *Wuxia zhi Riben*) and then became vastly used around 1922 with the serialisation of *Jianghu qixia zhuan (Legend of the Strange Swordsmen)*, to later welcome further influences from other cultures. As Stephen Teo writes in *Chinese Martial Arts Cinema: The Wuxia Tradition* (2009): “[...]. Many early wuxia films were nothing more than imitations of the western, the swashbuckler, or the European medieval romance even though wuxia was meant to countervail these genres” - feeding on foreign elements and changing them to suit the Chinese audiences, wuxia took shape as a genre transnational by its very nature. Thus, it was a perfect choice to become China's first international box office success: Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) has successfully awakened new interest in China and its culture – an interest, that seemingly lasts until this day. Dramas such as *The Untamed* (2019) or *Word of Honor* (2021) create dedicated, international fandoms, showing that wuxia even when intended for Chinese audiences, still attracts viewers from outside of China. It is thus worth asking a question – is wuxia so appealing because it is so different to what the Western viewer is used to, the appeal based on chinoiserie or orientalist fascination? Or is it more familiar, more universal and thus engaging for the Western audiences? This paper aims to examine both questions carefully and argue that the answer is a mix of both – of the “exciting otherness” paired with the well-known tropes and themes that the Western viewer can relate to.

Intermediation, Translation and Governance: The Formation of an Intermediary Order in the Amoy Trade between China and England, 1683–1690

Guo Wenhao, Sun Yat-Sen University

After the Qing conquest of Taiwan in 1683, the court gradually lifted its maritime prohibitions and began to experiment with institutions for managing foreign trade. At the port of Amoy, a local mechanism soon emerged in which Qing officials used translators and commercial brokers to

regulate and channel all contact with English merchants. This “intermediary order” conveyed imperial policy to the English, paced the rhythm of Sino-British trade, and ensured that the court’s regulations were enforced. The translator known to the English as Segoe (also rendered Segue or Seccoe) was both an agent and an architect of this order. Between 1683 and 1685, enjoying the patronage of Admiral Shi Lang and the Amoy civil authorities, Segoe turned his linguistic and informational advantages into brokerage power. He became the Qing court’s interpreter of its own trade policy and the principal mediator of competing interests. While safeguarding Beijing’s diplomatic and commercial prerogatives, he simultaneously maximized his private gains. Once the Hoppo’s office was established and a rudimentary customs tariff installed, Segoe disappears from the records of the English East India Company. By tracing Segoe’s changing roles during the first decade of the “open-sea” policy, this paper examines how the Qing court and local officials re-negotiated the distribution of authority over maritime commerce and constructed the institutional foundations of an intermediary order at Amoy.

Navigating Ideological Frontiers: A Transnational Analysis of How Yukong Moved the Mountains and Socialist Propaganda

Yangyang Xu, New York University

In 1971, during the Cultural Revolution, Joris Ivens was invited by the CPC to produce a series of documentaries depicting a communist society in China. The series, consisting of 12 documentaries, was titled *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* (1976). As a transnationally significant documentary on the Cultural Revolution, the series provides valuable visual materials for studying the ideological propaganda of socialist China in the 1970s. As an anti-imperialist foreigner, Ivens used his lens to assist the Chinese government in delivering socialist propaganda while also showcasing his fascination with socialist collectivism. Although the documentary series portrayed the active social landscape of the socialist proletariat, it also contained substantial political performances and state-orchestrated narratives. Unfortunately, the film ultimately failed to gain official recognition from the Chinese government and faced criticism in Western markets. Consequently, Ivens endured political pressure stemming from the ideological confrontations between East and West, positioning him as a transnational mediator. This documentary series also provided Western audiences with a visual reference for the practice of Eastern socialism. Using transnational theory, I will analyze the production context of this series, its reception in Eastern and Western distribution markets, and the underlying political power dynamics. Taking this as a case study, I aim to explore how, during the Cultural Revolution, transnational documentaries navigated the complex power dynamics and negotiations between state institutions, real social landscapes, and the documentary market under the immense pressure of bureaucratic mechanisms and diverse social ideologies. Additionally, I will attempt to reassess the propaganda policies of socialist China in terms of its visual culture during the Cultural Revolution and reconsider the cultural movement from the perspective of transnational documentary imagery.

The Role of Chinese Provinces in the Belt and Road Initiative (Francesca Chapman, Linda Calabrese and Rebecca Nadin)

Francesca Chapman, University of Leeds

Many studies have portrayed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a top-down, unified strategy designed to further specific Chinese foreign policy objectives. However, a growing body of literature challenges this prevailing understanding of China as a unitary foreign policy actor, emphasising the role of subnational actors in shaping both the BRI and China’s foreign policy more broadly. This paper contributes to these debates by analysing the diverse ways in which Chinese provinces engage with the BRI. Key studies on this issue have argued that fragmentation between and within institutional actors in China, as well as the BRI’s deliberate vagueness, allows for significant provincial autonomy. This creates opportunities for provincial governments to influence the BRI and advance their own interests using various strategies. However, their ability to do so is shaped by

resources such as their geographical location, economic capacity and relations with other actors. Accordingly, the BRI serves as an arena for interprovincial competition, as provincial governments seek to obtain financing, develop key industries or improve their standing. Despite existing in-depth research on individual provinces and several comparative studies, there remains limited understanding of how provincial involvement and financing vary across a broader spectrum of provinces. This paper contributes to these debates about provincial autonomy, influence and competition by studying the role of provincial actors in shaping, implementing and benefiting from BRI projects. Using a mixed-methods approach to analyse a wide range of provincial plans and a comprehensive dataset of BRI funding, we identify key trends and patterns of provincial engagement, including sectors, partner countries and scales of funding. We then use a comparative case study approach to explain these findings in more depth. By doing so, we aim to provide insights into the relationship between China's fragmented domestic politics and its international engagement.

F0608 The Long Second World War in China: Mobilization, Reconstruction, and Sino-Japan Relations

War of Everyone Against Everyone: Company Power and Military Violence in Coastal Jiangsu, 1937-1945

Mingran Cao, Leiden University

During the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (1937-1945), coastal Jiangsu experienced a power vacuum. Various political and military forces, including the Nationalist resistance force, the Japanese military, Chinese collaborationists, Chinese Communists, and local bandits, competed for power in the region. Amid this turbulent period, cotton plantations, which were managed by land reclamation companies, faced the persistent challenge imposed by competing regional and global powers. To consolidate power, the Japanese and Chinese collaborationist forces established the Northern Jiangsu General Administration of Settlement and Reclamation. Their goal was to secure military control over the region and nationalize company-owned land. Meanwhile, Chinese Communists gradually built their power base in coastal Jiangsu, with their *Hua Zhong Ju* (Central China Bureau) stationed in Yancheng, at the heart of the cotton plantations. Despite the Japanese aggression, Nationalist resistance forces maintained their fight in the region because of their deep roots in Jiangsu's local society. Local bandits also took advantage of the power vacuum, carving out their own power in the chaos. For the land reclamation companies, they had to adopt a flexible strategy to continue their business existence. Ironically, these companies found themselves leaning toward the Chinese Communists, as other warring factions posed greater existential threats to their property and operations. This paper will explore how these companies navigated their complex relationships with various military and political forces, ultimately experiencing a decline in both autonomy and influence. By examining the role of non-state actors, such as land reclamation companies, the paper contributes a new perspective to the scholarship on the global Second World War, highlighting how companies as important players negotiated with regional and global military forces during the war.

Violence of the Invalid: Displaced "Wounded Soldiers" in China's Long Second World War

Hanzhi Dai, University of Edinburgh

How could the wounded soldiers, a cared community with presupposed invalidity, become a major threat of public security? The arriving "wounded soldiers" during the long Second World War of China was an infamous force of disruption, often involved in armed clashes against local law enforcers and crimes that targeted the civilian population. This chapter will investigate the identity of the "wounded soldiers". As a group which claimed respect and prioritised welfare provisions given their battlefield sacrifice, the identity of wounded soldiers was an often target of forgery attempts by their comrades. Meanwhile, the wounded soldiers suffered from the degradation of healthcare infrastructure, displacement and predatory behaviour of their healthier compatriots as resources

were drained by the protracted war. Their resettlement in provisional military hospitals had also deteriorated their relationship with the civilian population. This chapter will examine the alleged misbehaviour of the “wounded soldiers” against this social background. While relying on materials from different localities across China, the situation in Jing County, a minority frontier in the Hunan-Guizhou borderland, would be engaged with specificity. Since 1941, heralded by the Production Affairs Office for Honoured Soldiers, amounted to more than 5,000 wounded soldiers and their relatives had been relocated there for resettlement, land reclamation, and various productive labours. Instead of making a model for mobilisation, the project had resulted in low productivity, wasteful deployment of resources, and clashes with the indigenous population. This paper will also record the intellectual debates and interlocutions which were oriented from this paradoxical violence of the “disabled”, leading to an interrogation of the concept of disability in the context of welfare regime and wartime hiatus.

Fissures in the Red Alliance: The Beijing Airport Incident and the Demise of Sino-Japanese Communist Networks

On I Lam, University of Cambridge

This study examines the development of transnational communist networks between China and Japan in the postwar period, focusing on the "Beijing Airport Incident" during the Cultural Revolution—a violent conflict at Beijing Airport involving Red Guards and members of different factions within the Japanese Communist Party (JCP). This incident is analyzed as a critical turning point in the disintegration of these networks. By investigating the causes and progression of the incident, the article delves into the entanglement of the JCP's internal factional divisions and its complex, long-term relationship with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). It would argue that the incident was not a coincidence but rather the culmination of unresolved historical issues in Sino-Japanese relations rooted in the broader context of the long Second World War. The collapse of Sino-Japanese communist networks had long been foreshadowed. During a period when China and Japan had not yet established formal diplomatic relations, amid strict restrictions on Chinese travel to Japan, Japanese communists who traveled to China served as crucial intermediaries in these exchanges, with Beijing emerging as the central stage for such interactions. However, the Japanese communist community in Beijing was not a homogeneous entity; rather, it reflected the factional divisions within the JCP itself. Serving as a bridge for communication between the JCP and the CCP, this group's historically intricate and often contentious relationship with the CCP ultimately catalyzed the eruption of conflicts, with the "Beijing Airport Incident" standing as a pivotal manifestation of these tensions. This study contributes to the understanding of transnational networks, inter-party dynamics, and the unresolved historical legacies within Sino-Japanese relations. It also offers a fresh perspective on the role of East Asia within the international communist movement in the context of the Cold War.

F0609 Archaeology, Material Documents, and Sensory/Historical Experience in Early and Medieval China

Towards a purpose in the placement of decision-making-manuscripts in early Chinese tombs

Caitlin Kowalski, University of Edinburgh

What does a legal officer and a medical doctor have in common? They both are faced with cases in which their patrons suffer harm and seek professional help to change this. Their job is to investigate, finding evidence and identifying symptoms of said harm to relate them to their origin – the perpetrator being a criminal in the legal case and an affliction in the medical one. To then come to a satisfactory conclusion by making a substantive case in front of the judge when being a legal officer, while processing an effective concoction to treat the ailment in medicine. Both, the legal and medical case can be broken down into an analytical map of decision-making from an initiating point to its solution. And in both cases, we can find that manuals or guidebooks have been written and handed down for generations. That these manuals from technical fields (legal, medical, astrological,

magical etc.) were continuously placed in tombs in early China shows that they had a distinct purpose in the tombs. This paper showcases but a few: from the manuals being mementos of important aspects of the deceased's lives, to them being guidebooks for the dead in their respective afterlives. Or – especially in the case of exorcistic and magical manuscripts – them being foci to ward against what they promise to teach: the malevolent spirits they expel. While my PhD thesis focuses on the analysis of the formal and structural aspects of the manuscripts in the tombs, this paper presents the discussion from the human perspective: how did people interact with the texts and in what light did they perceive them as parts of the tombs.

Scholarship and Collecting Practice of Chinese *mingqi* during the 1890s to the 1930s

Yifan Qiu, SOAS University of London

This paper aims to examine how *mingqi* 明器 generally became a new category of scholarly research and collectables from both Chinese and Western perspectives, tracing from the first English-language study on the Chinese burial system, published by the Dutch missionary J.J.M. de Groot (1854-1921) in 1892—an influential work that was widely cited for decades thereafter—to the first systematic publication on these objects by the Chinese archaeologist Zheng Dekun (1907-2001) in 1933, which was based on prior decades of research. *Mingqi* were originally created to serve the dead and, for thousands of years, were regarded solely as part of funerary practices. They were documented only in Chinese chronological texts that recorded burial rites, never as an independent subject of research. Due to their association with the afterlife, the Chinese traditionally considered them inauspicious, making them unlikely items for collection. However, these perceptions shifted dramatically in the late 19th century. More specifically, as foreigners gained greater opportunities to travel and reside in China, newly discovered materials prompted Chinese studies to emerge as a pivotal field within Asian studies. At the same time, late Qing scholars, Western-educated Chinese intellectuals, and government authorities held varied attitudes toward these artefacts. This paper draws on scholars' diaries, early published journals, and archival records to explore three aspects: first, how numerous *mingqi* were unearthed in modern times; second, through case studies of Luo Zhenyu (1866-1940) and Berthold Laufer (1874-1934), how scholars utilised *mingqi* as research materials; and third, why private collectors and public institutions collected and displayed these objects, particularly those from the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.), through the collecting context in Shanghai and London.

The Painted Archive: The Documentational Role of Cinnabar Pigments in Shang Oracle Bones

Peichao Qin, University of Cambridge

The use of vermilion pigmentation found on Shang dynasty oracle bone inscriptions (OBI) – the 13th – 11th century B.C. writing carved on turtle shells and cattle scapulas that are used for divination purposes – constitutes a unique epigraphic practice. The observed presence of red pigments within the oracle bone graphs, cracks and boundary lines, their frequent coverage across the entire surfaces of the shells and bones, as well as the precise confinements of cinnabar elements to the graph grooves all indicate the meticulous and thought-out nature of the endeavor. However, little evidence exists within the transmitted texts or recent archaeological findings that can help us determine the precise purposes of such practices. Was the vermilion pigmentation applied solely for stylistic and legibility purposes, or did it also serve a symbolic function that extends beyond its apparent documentative uses, and if so, who was the intended audience? This presentation, drawing on the latest findings and inscription examples, will attempt to address some of these issues and explore the relationship between specific forms of color usage and oracle bone divination. In particular, this presentation aims to re-evaluate the application patterns of cinnabar-lined inscriptions using a combination of new photographic evidence and statistical corpus analysis. By establishing the selective nature of pigmentation, its post-factum application following the incision of the primary divination record, and its strict single-event-based coloring norm, I will elucidate the documentational role of the red pigmentation within the oracle bone inscriptions, especially its

function in visual highlighting and in linking related inscriptions into distinct thematic or procedural groups. Moreover, by listing textual examples of red-pigmented inscriptions that contain royal prognostications, I will also reveal a political-religious dimension to the practice, where the act of pigmentation may have been employed to visually assert the king's interpretative authority in Shang state divination.

Tastes of the Tides: Seafood and the Changing Maritime Experience in Tang China

Flavia Xi Fang, SOAS University of London

For Tang-era travellers – whether willing seafarers or reluctant relocators – the sea became an increasingly familiar space. With the southward expansion of imperial boundaries, advancements in waterway travel technologies, and growing international maritime connections, the sights, tastes, and smells of the sea—along with its offerings—shifted from the realm of imagination to lived experience. Yet, it remained a place of ambiguities and contradictions. Literary works by Tang elites continued to depict southern and southeastern coastal areas as alien and perilous, filled with miasmic vapours, uncivilized barbarians, and strange, dangerous animals. In contrast, official historical records and travel accounts describe the wealth accumulating in major port cities and the multicultural makeup developing in these locales. This presentation explores these contradictions, offering a sensory analysis of Tang-era encounters with the sea and its coastal life. Drawing on recent scholarship on the history of seafood and the organization of coastal knowledge in the Tang period, it examines key passages from travelogues, poetry, and bureaucratic writings to uncover how Tang travellers perceived the sea landscape and its sensory dimensions—its sights, tastes, and smells. By doing so, it aims to deepen our understanding of the complex and evolving maritime experience during the Tang dynasty.

F0610 Translation: From the West to the East

Translating the West: Fu Yunlong and His Textual Seasickness

Jennifer (Junwa) Lau, University of Toronto Mississauga

This paper examines the writings of Fu Yunlong 傅雲龍 (1840–1901) to explore global history from the perspective of Chinese travelers during the Qing dynasty. His writing, as a part of a larger transpacific imagination from late Qing, reveals how discriminatory laws, imperial desires, mass migrations, power imbalances, and economic interests affected Chinese travelers who were distinct from other ethnic Chinese and non-ethnic Chinese itinerants traveling across the Pacific Ocean on the same ship and in the same era. Many of these Mandarin-speaking diplomats traveled on vessels with Cantonese-speaking ethnic counterparts, an indication of the multiplicity of “Chinese” migration experiences and distinct intraethnic encounters in the nineteenth century. This paper shows how the embodied seasickness of Fu Yunlong on his 1888 journey to North America on the Pacific Ocean as well as demonstrate how his corpus reflects the position of the Chinese empire with respect to the world at large. His writing shows the struggle of late nineteenth century Qing travellers who were leaving a declining empire for the West, and creating a new understanding of their native culture while describing and translating the West for their home nation.

Translating Yeats into Chinese: Analyzing Source and Target Cultures from a Glottodidactic Perspective

Agnieszka Wójcicka, Adam Mickiewicz University

This paper contributes to the reflection on literary translation of poetry from a glottodidactic perspective. Using the source material of the English-language poem “When You Are Old” by W.B. Yeats and its translations into Chinese, the first part provides an overview of selected translation theories, assessing their usefulness as methodological tools in the analysis of poetic text translations, with a particular emphasis on East-West intercultural transfer, including the phenomena of (self-)Orientalism or Sinologism. The second part applies these methodological tools to a detailed analysis of twelve versions of the interlingual translation of “When You Are Old” into

modern and classical Chinese performed by poets, scholars, and amateur translators. The consequences of specific lexical, syntactic and stylistic choices for the artistic expression of the text, but also for its existential or philosophical meaning are considered. The paper discusses also what a given translation says about the translator and the target culture, which to a greater or lesser extent influences the process and shape of translation. The third part widens the scope of the reflection on poetry translation, through engagement with two additional issues: the problem of machine translation of poetry – its quality as well as its characteristic artistic potential; and the matter of the so-called intersemiotic translation, which in this case is the singer Zhao Zhao's musical arrangement of Yeats' poem, entailing the necessity to adapt the canonical piece of work to mass reception.

Translator's Dilemmas: Some Observations on Louis de Poirot's Different Translations of the Same Biblical Terms into Chinese

Wojciech Rybka, Fu Jen Catholic University

Louis de Poirot, known in Chinese as 賀清泰 (1735-1813), was the last Jesuit priest at the Qing court in Beijing. He is arguably the first person to have translated a substantial part of the Bible from the Latin Vulgate into vernacular Chinese, rather than into classical Chinese, as many of his predecessors had done. This significant achievement, accomplished over two hundred years ago, was published for the first time in 2014. Perhaps due to this late publication, few research articles on this translation are available so far. As a pioneer in translating the Bible into vernacular Chinese, Poirot faced numerous challenges in choosing how to render various biblical terms in Chinese. It is notable that he was not always consistent in using the same words for the same terms. For example, he did not consistently translate 'God' as 天主 (*Tianzhu*), which has been the official Catholic term for 'God' in Chinese, but sometimes used 陡斯 (*Dousi*) instead. Additionally, in Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer, he translated the word for 'bread' as 饅頭 (*mantou* a traditional Chinese steamed bun), while in Luke's version of the same prayer, he rendered it as 糧 (*liang*, grain). The objective of the current paper is to present and analyze these and other similarly inconsequent translation decisions made by Poirot, with the aim of understanding the underlying logic behind them.

G0702 Revisit Mao-Era Construction and Institution

Documenting the Third Front Railway: Construction, Operation, Legacy

Paul Kendall, University of Westminster

Since its beginnings in the 1960s, the Third Front (三线) has undergone a major discursive transformation, from military secret under Mao Zedong and economic anachronism under Deng Xiaoping to industrial heritage under Xi Jinping. The initially secretive nature of this project has made it difficult to access texts written during the initial construction of the Third Front in the Mao era, with increasing limitations on access to state archives. In contrast, there is now an abundance of publicly available documentaries on the Third Front, allowing for a comparison of this project's treatment in audio-visual materials from across the Mao, Reform and Xi eras. This paper focuses specifically on the documenting of railways in southwest China, as a primary focus of Mao-era films on the Third Front that also features heavily in later documentaries. It shows firstly how documentaries of the 1970s – which were not initially available to the public and avoided direct mention of the Third Front – presented the construction of railways as a symbol of Maoist developmental progress. In the 1980s, discourse on the Third Front became more public but was also quite negative, and so documentaries continued to avoid directly mentioning the Third Front, while also shifting away from celebrating construction achievements to observing everyday operations on the railways. By the turn of the century, a further shift began to occur, as documentaries increasingly celebrated southwest railway construction – and the wider Third Front – as a developmental triumph of the early PRC, with a particular increase in output during the Xi era. Studying these shifts sheds light on the ways in which discourse about the Third Front has evolved

over the last 50 years, as well as the changing technical and narrative approaches employed in state-produced documentaries to address the industrial legacies of the Mao era.

Material Practice and Local Experience: The Construction and Evolution of the Shanghai Film Industry System in Early Socialist China (1949–1965)

Yaping Pu, Xiamen University

With the increasing prominence of media archaeology in academic discourse, film is no longer merely understood as a temporal and virtual image but rather as a material-based medium subject to historical and technological scrutiny. This shift in analytical perspective has broadened the scope of film historiography, positioning film materiality as a crucial area of inquiry. Within this framework, the film industry provides a compelling lens through which to examine the historical development of cinema. This study focuses on the materiality of film and conceptualizes the film industry as an integrated system encompassing the machinery and technological infrastructure necessary for film production, distribution, and exhibition. This system not only shaped the evolution of film as an art form but also influenced broader socio-political and economic transformations. In the years following the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the Shanghai film sector gradually constructed a relatively comprehensive domestic film industry system, having inherited and reorganized the technological and industrial resources from the preceding era. This process was facilitated by the institutional development of major film technology factories, such as the Shanghai Film Technology Factory, the Shanghai Film Machinery Factory, and the Shanghai Bayi Film Machinery Factory. Investigating the emergence and evolution of the Shanghai film industry system from a materialist perspective not only reconstructs its historical trajectory but also contributes to broader discussions on film materiality and industrial development in the contemporary digital era. Based on extensive field research, this study provides a diachronic analysis of Shanghai's film industry from 1949 to 1965, examining its foundational infrastructure, production mechanisms, and technological advancements. By doing so, this study elucidates the industrial practices and localized experiences that shaped Shanghai's film sector within the material landscape of early socialist China.

Institutional Persistence and New Social Practices in the De-*Danwei* Era

Huang Jiajing, University of Kassel

The *Danwei*, a unique phenomenon in Chinese society, is the basic element of the Chinese urban structure and redistribution. The *Danwei* system was the collaboration of institutionalized *Danwei* organizations. Northeast China took the lead in establishing the *Danwei* system, and its elements appeared earliest and lasted longest. The transformation from the *Danwei* society to the post-*Danwei* society in the Northeast region is not simply a linear replacement process, lagging in its move toward marketization. Daqing, the largest oil field in China, used to symbolize the most prosperous situation in northeastern China. It underwent an economic boom starting in the 1960s. With the reduction of oil resources and the de-*Danwei* reform, the city started to decay. Due to excessive reliance on petroleum and the lagging effects of the monotonous *Danwei* system, state-owned companies and bureaucracy continue to influence urban governance and social development. The collective consciousness and behaviours shaped by the *Danwei* society further expanded to social relations and day-to-day life. The *Danwei* system, operating invisibly with the institutionalized *Danwei* culture, can also be regarded as the flow of legacy. On the other hand, due to the interdependence of structure and agency, new social practices and innovative forms of resource coordination are evolving in the pre-*Danwei* physical space. Urban spatial development is discontinued, and intellectuals are emigrating. The study focuses on the interaction between institutional persistence and emerging social practices. The main research question is “What are the lagging effects of the institutionalized *Danwei* culture, and how have the new social practices emerged with the de-*Danwei* reform in Daqing since 2000?” The qualitative data was collected through sixty semi-structured interviews and self-observation on the field from 2022 to 2024.

G0703 Mobility, Policy, and Identity in Contemporary China

Deploying Bespoke Mobility Capital in Post-Deng Xiaoping China: The Transnational Experiences of Young Privileged Chinese Entrepreneurs in the United Kingdom

Wenfu Zhang, University of Warwick

This study examines why young, privileged Chinese individuals emigrate, how they sustain fluid, ongoing movement, and the life goals through migrant entrepreneurship. Through three years of field observations and interviews with 30 young Chinese migrant entrepreneurs in the UK, this study reveals that they migrate primarily to escape an increasingly "risk society", characterized by reduced social and personal freedoms, a hostile business environment, and hyper-competition within professional and entrepreneurial sectors in the PRC. In this context, elite-oriented immigration policies of Northern countries align with these migrants' goals, creating a duality of 'neoliberalism as exception' and 'exceptions to neoliberalism', which facilitates selective entry for young, privileged Chinese. Intriguingly, even within the perceived context of an increasingly 'risk society,' young, privileged migrants are hesitant to relinquish their Chinese nationality, despite having diligently obtained UK residency. This choice reflects a deliberate strategy to cultivate 'mobility capital'. A Northern country's residency offers mobility to exit China when "risks" emerge, while Chinese nationality enables a strategic return when advantageous. This study contributes to the literature on how young, privileged Chinese individuals from the not-so-distant 'Deng Xiaoping Era' view China's ongoing "New Era" as shaping their future aspirations with uncertainty; it examines how revenue-driven immigration controls in postcolonial Northern countries impact Southern elites by enabling them to project their domestic inequality issues onto a global scale through the use of mobility capital. In this study, I term these young Chinese elites "Chinese Übermensch," an unparalleled phenomenon in Chinese migration history.

How was it retrenched? The Politics of China's Pension Reform for Public Sector Employees

Zihui Xie, University of Glasgow

There has been abundant literature exploring the processes and mechanisms through which mature pension systems have been retrenched in democratic political systems. However, little is known about why and how an authoritarian state such as China initiated and implemented pension reforms relating to tightening the pension rights of public sectors employees despite resistance from some beneficiary groups. Thus, my research aims to uncover the processes and actors underpinning the reform, and the strategies adopted by Chinese governments to overcome resistance and to implement the reform locally. By using the process tracing method and intensive analysis on documentary materials, the research finds that the change of central ideas, the integrated interests of central bureaucracies and policy entrepreneurs from National People's Congress contributed to the initiation of pension reforms relating to tightening the pension rights of public sectors employees. Moreover, with a combination of documentary research and in-depth semi-structured interviews, the research finds that national and sub-national governments employed a variety of strategies to implement the reform, including strategies discussed in pension retrenchment literature such as compensation and obfuscation, as well as indigenous strategies such as classification, propaganda, the obedience via technology and the localised mediation strategy. Thus, this research will make theoretical and empirical contributions to the pension retrenchment theories by shedding light on the actors and strategies in enabling retrenchment reforms in the context of China.

Colonial Legacies and Self-Identification: The Significance of 'Miao' vs. 'Hmong' in Academic and Community Discourse

Olena Bogdanova, Lviv National Academy of Arts

The distinction between the ethnonyms "Miao" and "Hmong" has been the subject of ongoing debate among scholars, policymakers, and ethnic communities. This speech examines the historical and colonial influences that have shaped the usage of these terms, as well as their implications for

identity formation, self-representation, and cross-cultural discourse. The classification of the Miao people in China, largely shaped by Qing dynasty policies and later reinforced by state-driven ethnic categorization, contrasts with the self-identification of Hmong communities in Southeast Asia and the global diaspora. This presentation explores the role of colonial and state narratives in constructing ethnic identities and highlights how external naming practices have affected community self-perceptions and international scholarship. Drawing upon linguistic, anthropological, and historical perspectives, the discussion underscores the importance of respecting self-identification while acknowledging the geopolitical and sociocultural contexts that have contributed to the persistence of the "Miao" label in China and the preference for "Hmong" in Western discourse. Furthermore, the speech critically engages with the impact of migration, globalization, and transnational identity politics on the terminology debate. It argues that understanding the significance of these names is essential for fostering a more nuanced and culturally sensitive academic and policy-oriented discussion. In conclusion, the presentation advocates for an approach that prioritizes community agency in self-naming while recognizing the historical forces that have shaped contemporary discourse on Miao-Hmong identity.

G0704 Heroes and Ordinary People

Heroism Across Cultures: A Comparative Study of Riders of the Purple Sage and The Legend of the Condor Heroes

Guanwei Zhu (Chris Zhu), University of Strathclyde

This paper investigates the culturally constructed nature of heroism through a comparative analysis of Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912) and Jin Yong's *The Legend of the Condor Heroes* (1957–1959). By examining the protagonists—Lassiter and Guo Jing—this study reveals how heroic ideals are shaped by differing philosophical and cultural foundations: American frontier individualism versus Chinese Confucian collectivism. Lassiter exemplifies the archetypal Western hero: a lone gunslinger driven by justice, personal redemption, and resistance against institutional oppression. His heroism is intertwined with rugged individualism and the myth of Manifest Destiny, where violence serves as a redemptive and purgative force. In contrast, Guo Jing's journey reflects the traditional Chinese concept of *xia* (侠), rooted in *ren* (仁, benevolence), righteousness, and national loyalty. His martial strength is guided by moral restraint, social duty, and the ethical teachings of Confucianism. The paper also considers how geographical settings—whether the lawless American desert or the morally coded Chinese *jianghu*—mirror and reinforce these cultural values. Ultimately, while both heroes challenge oppression, their motivations and moral frameworks diverge significantly. Lassiter seeks personal freedom and justice; Guo Jing fights for collective well-being and national salvation. This comparative study demonstrates how literary heroism functions as a cultural symbol, reflecting broader societal ideals. It contributes to the growing field of Sino-Western literary dialogue by illuminating how national identity, moral philosophy, and narrative tradition inform the portrayal of heroism in both Western and Chinese literary canons.

The Return of the Iconic Chinese Comic and Cartoon Heroes: An (Unexpected) Reunion on Ice and Snow

Dr. Giovanna Puppini, University of Genoa

This paper explores the resurgence of some iconic Chinese comic and cartoon heroes in the context of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, focusing on the intersection between childhood nostalgia, adaptation, transmediality and the promotion of national sports and identity. By analysing the adaptation of characters such as Monkey King (*Sun Wukong* 孙悟空), Nezha (*Nezha* 哪吒), Snow Kid (*Xue Haizi* 雪孩子) and Calabash Brothers (*Hulu Xiongdi* 葫芦兄弟), which originally featured in traditional folklore, comics, and animated films, this paper explores how they were reimaged in a promotional campaign that brought them together for the first time. The campaign used both static and animated formats to engage audiences on traditional media and social media (Weibo) and resulted from an unprecedented collaboration between the Shanghai Animation Film Studios, the

China National Winter Sports Management Centre and the digital marketing agency Hylink. The creative team behind the campaign resurfaced these beloved characters in order to evoke the childhood memories of the generations born in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, while integrating the 2D culture of the 90s and 00s, and juxtaposing them with the impact of contemporary design and animation. The analysis of this purposively selected case study demonstrates that the revival of these iconic comic and cartoon heroes aligns with national objectives (such as encouraging participation in winter sports), but also serves as a powerful tool for fostering a collective sense of national identity through elements of nostalgia; more importantly, this campaign was also intended to promote the idea of “China cool” (*Zhongguo ku* 中国酷) through the establishment of the so-called “Chinese Children Stories Alliance” (*Zhongguo tonghua lianmeng* 中国童话联盟).

Ordinary people and disaster culture – A study of four Chinese nonfictions

Kerou Zhang, University of Nottingham

This research project aims at studying ordinary people in disasters through the discourse analysis of four selected works of Chinese nonfiction. The nonfictions are about SARS pandemic, Wenchuan Earthquake, and COVID-19 pandemic, disasters that are believed have reached the standard of national disasters, and the works are chosen because they are relatively influential. Disasters, as destructive and traumatic events, are often believed as outside of ordinary lives, yet its effects are results of social mechanisms that are embedded in ordinary lives. In disasters, ordinary people are valued because of their great numbers and the power they possess to support or oppose the ruling class. Disaster culture is constructed to influence people’s perceptions and behaviours. On the one hand, people are represented negatively, it can be traced to the one hundred years of humiliation, and is related to information control exerted by the government, encouraging people to conform to government policies; on the other hand, hero culture inspires people to stand up in time of crisis, establishes examples of extraordinary heroes and ordinary heroes for people to follow. Together, disaster shapes citizenship of China, stressing both rights and responsibilities, and constructs the desired good citizens. This disaster culture aims at deriving something positive out of the negative disasters, and focuses on the unity of Chinese people, and legitimacy and authority of the Party and the government.

G0705 Hong Kong: Ritual Texts, Poetry and Print

Examining the Permeability of Popular Buddhism and Popular Daoism Through a Study of Jiao Ritual Text Collections of a Hong Kong Chaozhou Buddhist Society

Wong Yee Ting, Chinese University of Hong Kong

Scholars have explored the permeability of Buddhism and Daoism in Chinese regions, in particular of their popular dimensions. Through studying religious texts and liturgies, they present the various forms of interactions between the two religions. In contemporary China, case studies from the southern region indicate that this phenomenon is still prevalent across the country. This is also the case of Hong Kong Chaozhou Buddhist societies. Although some studies examine the ritual services offered by these societies, they often focus primarily on death rituals, overlooking other available practices. In fact, the masters from the societies also provide a Daoist blessing ritual, named Jiao 醮 according to the field study and the collected ritual texts. Based on these sources, this paper reviews the ritual program, analyses the used texts, and presents another case that demonstrates the interactions of Popular Daoism and Popular Buddhism in the contemporary time. To the Chaozhou migrants, blessing rituals are often provided in Daoist traditions. Even they emigrated to regions or countries that lack of the required ritual experts, they still have the needs of requiring Jiao services. Hence, the Chaozhou Buddhist masters step in and become the Daoist ritual service providers. Compared to the Jiao rituals conducted by local Daoist priests, those offered by these Buddhist masters are much more simplified. They recite three Daoist scriptures and incorporate the Jiao ritual into the popularised Buddhist ritual framework. The case offers insight into the popularisation of Daoism and the broad spectrum of ritual Buddhism developing in the contemporary time. Through

Jiao, both religions expand their influence on one another, further enhancing the permeability of the two.

Connected under the Tradition of Poetry: A Glimpse of the 1950s to 1960s Poetry Events in Hong Kong

Wai Tsui, Chinese University of Hong Kong

In the post-World War II period, Hong Kong emerged as an increasingly significant literary centre for "southbound writers" from mainland China and a nexus for Chinese writers in Southeast Asia. While most research of this era focuses on prose and fiction writers, it is noteworthy that poetry was also a popular literary form at the time. Beginning in the late 1940s, an event known as the "Poet's Festival" was held in Hong Kong, attracting numerous participants. Originally started in Chongqing during the war to boost national morale, the "Poets' Festival" continued as a literary event in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and later Macao, maintaining its popularity in Hong Kong from the 1950s to the 1960s. This article surveys the development of this event in Hong Kong, with a particular focus on a collection of poetry from the 1959 event. The 1959 Poets' Festival Collection is a valuable historical and literary text that provides insights into the trends in poetry writing in Hong Kong and the interactions among poets in Southeast Asia who participated in the event. The collection comprises more than 200 poems, predominantly in Classical styles but also featuring new styles. This article explores the themes and styles of these works and examines how they have enriched the research on Hong Kong's literary history.

Twisted Growth: Chinese Businessmen and Cultural Production in Colonial Hong Kong, 1920-1939 **Michelle Chan, University of Oxford**

From the 1920s, local critics characterised Hong Kong as a commercially developed yet culturally backwards colony — a “” place, as echoed in the assessments of migrant Chinese intellectuals arriving in the 1930s. A double bind of Chinese and colonial British gazes resulted in a conflicted cultural space: to maintain a Chinese identity under colonialism, Hong Kong elites leveraged traditionalism and global cultural literacy alike, yet failed to measure up to post-May-Fourth Chinese standards for vernacular writing and mass enlightenment. To probe such judgements of business elites' roles in Hong Kong's commercial and cultural spheres, this paper analyses the commercial print media of the retailer *Leung Kwok Ying* and that of its business owners, the Leungs. This comprised marketing pamphlets, newspaper advertisements, magazines, an educational *manhua* volume and a cartoon exhibition. Integrating business and media lenses, I investigate cost, affordability and consumer reception on one hand, and explore visual and textual meanings on the other. In the Leungs' cultural endeavours and creative marketing, commerce and culture were mutually constitutive. The Leungs leveraged financial capacity and personal networks to create a variety of print media, whilst, as a business, their marketing attempted to mould a modern consumer that would obtain material and mental fulfilment from the same source. Here, Hong Kong's perceived “deformity” was productive: businessmen responded to anxieties about cultural development through pedagogical content, writers confronted tensions between urban prosperity and capitalist exploitation, and Hong Kong's colonial status provided a liminal space for the articulation of national and global outlooks even as war waged across the border. Thus, this paper provides a lens into 1920s-1930s Hong Kong as a fraught, but vibrant, cultural space.

G0706 Sex, Family Bonds and Mentally Disabled Parents

Pillow Princess, or Passive Dominance? The agency within and beyond the bedroom

Xun Ril Li, University of Toronto and Yin Zhang, Université de Genève

Often surfacing in Anglophone queer vernacular, the term “pillow princess (枕头公主 zhentou gongzhu)” describes an individual, typically a lesbian person, who prefers to passively receive sexual pleasure rather than reciprocate. Yet in the context of Chinese online communities such as RedNote (Xiaohongshu), this seemingly straightforward label acquires new layers of cultural and social

significance, such as filial piety, social harmony, and prescribed gender norms (i.e. T-P model, which is a butch-femme-like lesbian relation). By foregrounding how users discuss and debate the pillow princess phenomenon on RedNote, we spotlight the bedroom as a revealing arena for broader inquiries into gender, care, and belonging within contemporary Chinese lesbian communities. Using sentiment and discourse analysis to unfold RedNote posts, we uncover how sentiments reflected in discussions of pillow princesses construct a nuanced map of intimate choices—whether to give, to receive, or to remain still—within and beyond the bedroom. We tease out how these discussions reflect deeply ingrained cultural scripts regarding women’s roles in both sexual and emotional exchanges. We thus argue that, far from merely passive, the “pillow princess” role emerges here as an intentional negotiation of one’s own pleasure, reframing the notion of ‘doing nothing’ as a quiet assertion of agency. Positioned within the Chinese socio-cultural landscape, our work not only reinterprets the “pillow princess” figure but also prompts a critical reassessment of how we define “giving” and “receiving”. In so doing, we expand the conversation of power in forms of passive engagement that shapes the everyday performance of love.

Socialist Knitting: Remaking Family Bonds, Consumption Aesthetics, and Social Relations in Maoist China

He Sun, Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Recent scholarship on clothing consumption in Maoist China has predominantly emphasized its political implications, particularly in relation to the formation and dissolution of social class and gender, thereby framing the connection between the nation and its citizens. However, these studies have largely overlooked the mediating role of the family in this process. Knitting, a fiber-weaving technique with origins in 2nd-century Europe, was first introduced to China in the 1840s, initially circulating among the upper class. During the Republican era (1912–1949), knitting gained further traction alongside the growth of the domestic wool textile industry. Yarn manufacturers actively promoted the craft through diverse sales and marketing strategies, including newspaper advertisements, competitions, and the celebrity of knitting experts. Yet, how did this practice evolve after the founding of the PRC in 1949? Was it discontinued as a "bourgeois" relic, or was it strategically repurposed within the new socialist framework? Drawing on an analysis of newspaper reports from three major post-1949 publications (People’s Daily, Wenhui Po, and Xinmin Evening News), as well as publicly circulated knitting instructions and propaganda posters, this study identifies a strategic tendency in the PRC’s promotion of knitting: the construction of a public discourse that obscured the boundary between production and consumption while avoiding overt intrusion into the familial sphere. Characterized by its non-mechanized nature, material accessibility, and ease of skill acquisition, knitting was framed as a form of leisurely domestic labor—one that carried an implicit, spectral "familial" attachment extending both within and beyond the family unit. This discourse was further reinforced through an aesthetic valorization of thrift. I argue that knitting culture in Maoist China was not merely a continuation or a termination of Republican-era practices but was deliberately expanded to reach a wider public by leveraging and amplifying its existing legacies.

De-stigmatization: A Case Study on Chinese Art Brut Therapy Narratives and Their Impact on Mentally Disabled Patients

Yixuan Chen, Ohio State University

Coined by French artist Jean Dubuffet in the 1950s, Art Brut refers to works by self-taught artists, prisoners, and individuals with mental illnesses, challenging mainstream art through raw, undisciplined styles and redefining authenticity. By 2025, this art form has spread globally, with art therapy centres enabling individuals with mental illnesses to express unspoken feelings and thoughts through non-interventional creation processes. Aligning with Dubuffet's definition of art, creation in art therapy also helps patients re-socialize with a new identity: Art Brut artists. This study examines an art therapy centre in Nanjing, China, focusing on how Art Brut therapy reconstructs the social

identities of individuals with mental disabilities by "artifying" their works, reshaping public perceptions of mental illness, and eventually challenging stigmas against mental disability patients. Using qualitative methods such as literature review, sentiment analysis, and semantic network analysis, it analyzes published materials, the research indicates that the narrative of Art Brut therapy promotes positive public images for individuals with mental disabilities, seeing them as the representation of "nature" and "culturally un-disciplined", contrasting with stereotypical portrayals in Chinese media that depict them as dangerous or uncontrollable. Framing them as the "positive Other" suggests the potential romanticization of mental illness. However, the semi-interviews with social workers there are used to reveal the effect of destigmatization of mental disability patients in daily social interactions. This research highlights how Art Brut therapy replaces stigmatizing narratives with empowering representations, sheds light on the lives of individuals with mental disabilities in China and reflects the development of Art Brut and art therapy in this context. It calls for greater awareness of mental health and demonstrates Art Brut's global potential to challenge stigma.

G0707 Gender in Transition: Women's Local Context, Diversity, and Action in the Jiangnan Region from the Late Qing Dynasty to the People's Republic of China [P, O]

During the period between the late Qing Dynasty and the People's Republic of China, women have experienced a tremendous transition and sought for their agency in different ways. This panel, including 3 articles, focuses on the diverse roles of woman such as female students, revolutionaries and prostitutes in Jiangnan region from 1880 to 1950, examining their reactions and adaptations to the social transition from the perspective of local context. Knowledge, consumption, and revolution would be discussed in this group to reflect on the impact of modernity on Chinese women. The first article shows the traditional knowledge of fauna and flora that women in Jiangnan region possessed was gradually replaced by new Western science. In the process of modernization. In society and schools, women began to learn new western zoology and botany, which were localized and gendered scientific knowledge. They also participated in the production and promotion of scientific knowledge in modern China. The second study examines Shanghai's high-end sex industry decline post-1920 Concession prostitution ban, analyzing the termination of Qunfang Election Conference. It investigates how literati cultural practices transformed into commercialized activities through covert erotic operations in venues. The research reveals interactions between sexual consumption, social power dynamics, and resource allocation in treaty-port society. It would be highlighted how regulated vice became embedded in urban modernity through media representations and elite patronage networks. The third article focuses on a case study of Hu Shiyin, a woman talent in the Zhenan area. She have promoted the women's movement in the local society since the mid-1920s, by integrating into the transformation of local social education, social networks, and political parties' competition. The author would reflect on the interweaving of gender within the early modern China and provide an observation from local context to explain the upsurge in the women's movement since the mid-1920s.

How Women Engage with the Field of Science: The Animal and Plant World of Women in Jiangnan in the Modern Era

Xinwei Ni, Fudan University

Before the modern era, women in the Jiangnan region accumulated a wealth of knowledge about plants and animals in their daily labor. Since the introduction of Western zoological and botanical knowledge to China, the knowledge had been localized through the social concepts of gender and education. This essay focuses on this process of change. In Women's Magazine, the popularization of botany and zoology was confined to women's daily labors, such as farming, gardening, and medical care. The popularization of knowledge on flora and fauna was also closely related to socio-political, economic, and cultural aspects, and became a vehicle for the propagation of Tianyan Lun (Evolution

and Ethics and other Essays), the order of organisms in nature and the Western colonial discourse. In the process of modernization, the localized empirical knowledge of plants and animals in mulberry farming and agricultural accounts was gradually replaced by new scientific knowledge from the West. Women were absorbed into the modern scientific education system. Fei Dasheng, the famous Chinese silk expert, spread science and technology to the rural areas by working with peasants, which led to technological reforms. In agriculture, women from different social classes entered higher education to study biology and agronomy, aiming to transform the agriculture of China. Many of them brought their previous experience in agricultural labor into the study and production of scientific knowledge. Shen Liying and Cao Chengying, two breeding geneticists, grew up in the girls' schools of Jiangnan in the 20th century. After completing studies in Cornell University, they entered scientific research institutes to conduct agronomic research. As leading female scientists, they continued to use their scientific knowledge to care for other women and the development of the country, and persevered in ideals of scientific exploration in spite of various difficult circumstances.

Gender Consumption and Diversified Business Models in Late Qing and Early Republican Playgrounds

Yarong Xu, East China Normal University

Gender Consumption and Diversified Business Models in Gaming Culture tends to analyze how the "Flower Election" has evolved from a literati cultural activity into a commercial activity from the perspective of micro-gender history, presenting the trend of cultural activities gradually sinking under the wave of consumerism. Under the general trend, two propositions are centred on: the connection between prostitutes and the construction of a new image of women in Shanghai in the Republic of China? What modern factors were added to the flower selection and flower list activities in the early Republican period compared with those in traditional China? In the late Qing Dynasty, the "Flower List" in the "Game Newspaper" was a literati event, and the popularity of the literati judging prostitutes boosted the sales of the publication. In late 1917, the New World Newspaper and the New World Playground co-organized the "Fanfang Election Convention". "The activity was very popular in the late Qing Dynasty. This event was based on the "Flower List" of the late Qing Dynasty and included voting by benefactors. By adjusting the openness and commercialization of the event, the event is not only a show of wealth for the benefactors, but also shows the mobilization of sex and social resources by prostitutes. At the same time, the profitability of the event is not to be underestimated: in terms of reading consumption, the literati issued texts around the event and printed them many times; in addition, the New World Game Centre, through the Flower Election, boosted the game centre's commercial profits from ticketing, demonstrating the flourishing of gender consumption in the early Republican era.

Gender, Revolution, and Social Networks: Hu Shi-yin's Women's Movement in Wenzhou during the 1920s

Jiayue Lin, Fudan University

For decades, scholars have recognized the 1920s as a pivotal moment in the women's movement in early Republic Of China. Prior studies have explored the vibrant women's movements in Shanghai, Guangdong, and other revolutionary centres during this period. Recent discoveries of local materials highlight regional disparities, drawing attention to movements in areas beyond central cities. According to the newly discovered materials, the women's movement emerging in Wenzhou in the 1920s—a revolutionary phenomenon on the periphery of Zhejiang province. This paper focuses on this emergence of the women's movement in Wenzhou, investigating how this movement took root locally and identifying the individuals who propelled it into the fabric of local society. Utilizing autobiographical manuscripts, interviews, and memories of Hu Shiyin and fellow revolutionaries, these Women's own voices about the women's movements would be shown and examined by various personal memories, official archives, local newspapers and etc. It should be clarified that these women, however, did not fit the typical mold of well-trained female cadres. Instead, they were

self-empowered activists with strong indigenous consciousness in a revolutionary context, known as 'Talents' or 'Ren Cai' in that period. Three sections would be discussed to present the Women Talent Hu Shiyin integrated with the local educational transformation, social networks and the political parties. Firstly, with the impact of modernization on local society, Hu absorbed diverse enlightenment from the progressive women's education locally and turned to adopt Marxist identity. Secondly, she engaged with various social networks, including clans, classmate groups, and public spaces, to drive the local diffusion of the women's movement. In addition, the third part illuminated amidst KMT-CPC differentiation, Hu advocated for women's rights and the interests of CPC by influencing the KMT's Second National Congress and reorganizing the local party branch, achieving some autonomy.

G0708 Economy, Importation and Market

From the Summer Palace to the Saloni: How industrialisation and maritime progress made Chinoiserie a popular import in Cyprus

Charlotte Steffen, Varvara Stivarou, Limassol Patisserie Municipal Museum, Historical Archive and Research Centre

The colonisation of Asia by Western Imperial powers led to the Orientalist Movement of the 17th to 19th centuries. Subsequently, Orientalism and Chinoiserie expanded in European art, scholarship, and material culture. While Cyprus remained largely unaffected under Ottoman rule during this period, certain Chinese decorative items later gained popularity on the island as part of broader European aesthetic trends. Following the British occupation of Cyprus in 1878 and its subsequent incorporation into the British Empire, local elites began to emulate Western European fashions, shifting away from Ottoman influences. This transformation extended to interior decoration, with imported Chinese porcelain, lacquerware, and furniture becoming desirable symbols of refinement. Furthermore, with the British, the art-nouveau style also gained entry into the Limassolian salons. Indeed, the art style containing various elements of Orientalism would lead to the purchase of further Asian-styled goods in Cyprus, primarily in the form of various decorative items. Chinoiserie in Cyprus can be divided into two distinct phases. In the late 19th and early to mid-20th centuries, it was an expensive luxury reserved for the upper class. By the 1950s, industrialization and improved maritime trade made Chinese and Japanese porcelain more affordable, leading to its widespread adoption as a standard wedding gift among the working class. While these objects were initially prized for their association with Western elite tastes, later generations acquired them as fashionable household items without deeper knowledge of their historical significance. By the 1960s and 1970s, shifting aesthetic preferences, influenced by modernist and countercultural movements, led to a decline in Chinoiserie's popularity, though many pieces remained as heirlooms. This study examines the evolving perception of Chinoiserie in Cyprus through oral histories and material culture analysis, tracing its transformation from an elite status symbol to a commonplace household item and, eventually, a nostalgic relic of past generations.

Market, values and ethical dilemma: Cross-Strait Taiwanese enterprises in regional tensions

Michelle H-J. Tsai, National Chung Cheng University

This paper explores the ethical dilemma faced by Taiwanese businesses and their corresponding strategies when they operate business across the Strait amid increasing regional tensions. Since China's economic rise, Taiwanese businesses have been the target of China's united front work to pursue its "One China" policy and to win the hearts and minds of Taiwanese people. While much has been studied about the economic and political impact of China's united front strategies on Taiwanese businesses, little attention has been paid on how these enterprises manage the conflicting nationalist discourse and the competing identities of consumers across the Strait to minimize the business risks. Based on data collected through ethnographic fieldwork in Shanghai and Taipei, this paper examines how identities are capitalized through business practices that speak to consumers on both sides of the Strait, which also unravels an intricate process in which a business

subject is constructed between markets, values and ethics. By doing so, the paper captures a significant moment when the current heightening geopolitical tensions have put enterprises in higher risks upon doing business in China, and how cross-Strait Taiwanese enterprises on the beachhead of the tensions walk a tightrope between making money and navigating nationalism.

G0709 Incident and International Relationship

The Lincheng Incident (1923): A Turning Point in China-West Relations?

Olga V. Alexeeva, Université du Québec à Montréal

The Lincheng Incident of 1923 (临城劫车案) serves as a compelling case study in the intricate dynamics of China-West relations during the tumultuous early 20th century. The fallout from this incident reverberated globally, underscoring the challenges and opportunities in China's engagement with Western powers amid a backdrop of internal upheaval and external pressures. Following the 1911 Revolution, the collapse of central authority and the rise of warlords (军阀) destabilized the country, fueling debates on Westernization (西化) and national development among Chinese elites. Concurrently, the resurgence of banditry exacerbated internal instability, raising concerns among the great powers about their economic interests in China – a dynamic epitomized by the Lincheng Incident. A thousand of armed bandits attacked the Blue Express luxury train in southern Shandong near Lincheng, looting it and taking hundreds of passengers, including Western nationals, as hostages. Western governments swiftly issued an ultimatum to Beijing, demanding the immediate release of hostages and compensation. Some powers—Britain, the United States and France—used the incident to push for foreign supervision of Chinese railways and delay the implementation of the Washington Conference recommendations on restoring Chinese sovereignty. However, in the case of Lincheng, gunboat diplomacy failed, forcing Western powers to reevaluate their approach to relations with China. This paper examines how Chinese diplomats crafted their response to the Lincheng Incident, skillfully exploiting the heightened rivalries among major powers that intensified after World War I. It explores the role of Chinese public opinion, media and government strategies in negotiations and analyses the incident's short- and long-term implications for China's international status. Drawing on reports by Aimé Joseph de Fleuriau, French minister plenipotentiary in Beijing, the analysis sheds light on the motivations and evolving positions of key actors and situates the Lincheng Incident as a pivotal moment in the dynamics of China-West relations.

In the Name of IRA, Japanese Anti-British Campaign in 1939

Peilin Li, University of Leicester

In a report sent from Beijing British Embassy on 11 September 1939, three leaflets were submitted in the name of "Irish Revolutionary Army (China sect)". They stated the organisation was secretly organised in the past six months. The leaflet cried "don't say anti-British, say anti-English". These leaflets were founded on 6 September, five days later, a large cloth streamer was hung in a prominent position across the Changan Street in Beijing. It said "let Ireland be represented in China. To hell with British passports." Although earlier this year, the Irish Republican Army organised a series terrorist activity, including bombing, in England. But this mentioned Irish Revolutionary Army was different from Irish Republican Army. In fact, behind this so-called "IRA" was Japanese Army and puppet government. An American press correspondent informed British Embassy that he had seen a Chinese policeman hanging up one of these banners that morning. At the next regular Japanese military press conference, the spokesman was ruthlessly "heckled" by the British Embassy. One month before this embarrassing incident, Japan had just lifted the blockade of Tianjin British Concession. However, the tension between Britain and Japan did not improve, and the anti-British movement in Japan did not stop; on the contrary, the anti-British movement became the "national policy" of Japanese occupied China. The Sino-Japanese war reached its third year. With occupying a large part of the eastern coast of China, and the collaboration of Wang Jingwei, Japan was no longer content to maintain a series of local and temporary regimes. In propaganda, by following GMD's

nationalism discourse before the war and merging it into the Pan-Asianism, Japan sought to establish a unified regime, a pro-Japanese nationalist government, a “national state”.

Expansion and Division: Indigenous Clergy and Fractured Geographies of the Russian Orthodox Mission in China, 1860s-1930s

Anastasiia Akulich, University of Leeds

Over the course of its history, Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in China (1715-1956) existed in between the two states, performing functions from facilitating diplomatic communication in the 18th century to providing support to White Russians fleeing to China after 1917. The late 1890s-1910s are generally considered to be the apex of its proselytising activities, coinciding with a period of some of the most intense Russian imperialist expansion into China. This paper is going to demonstrate how the geographies of the two did not necessarily coincide, particularly emphasising the division between churches that served primarily Russian and primarily Chinese audiences. Most notably, the churches in Manchuria and Xinjiang did not engage in active proselytism, focusing instead on catering to the expatriate communities. In 1907, Manchurian churches were moved out of the mission's jurisdiction altogether. By examining the development of primarily Chinese parishes run by Chinese religious professionals this paper will highlight the fractured nature of the Orthodox Christian landscape in China.

G0710 Scepticism, Satire and Sensuality: Popular Discourses on Buddhist and Daoist Religion Across Different Periods in China [P]

Religious traditions have long shaped intellectual, social, and moral life in Chinese history, yet their interchange with secular concerns—whether through scepticism, satire, or sensuality—provides a compelling perspective on broader cultural dynamics. This panel takes an interdisciplinary approach to examine how religious figures and symbols have been subverted and secularised and, conversely, how secular activities have been imbued with religious significance, highlighting the fluidity of the sacred-secular divide across different historical and cultural contexts. Through diverse case studies, we explore these shifting boundaries: Ming Confucian Wang Yangming's 王陽明 pragmatic engagement with Daoist practices, later framed as a religious controversy; Qing Dynasty satirical portrayals of Buddhist and Daoist monks in the jestbook *Expanded Forest of Laughs* 笑林廣記; and the 1980s erotic re-imagination of the Daoist nun Yu Xuanji 魚玄機 in Hong Kong cinema. By integrating intellectual history, literary humour, and visual representation, this panel traces the reciprocal transformation of religious and secular discourses in Chinese tradition.

Religious Belief or Secular Pursuit? Re-assessing Wang Yangming's Daoist Experience

Yizhu Li, University of Edinburgh

Although the renowned Ming Confucian Wang Yangming 王陽明 (given name Wang Shouren 王守仁, 1472–1529) is widely recognised for his engagement with Daoism in his youth, whether these experiences were genuinely religious remains debated. Multiple historical records reveal that Wang was particularly drawn to Daoist theories of “nourishing life (*yangsheng* 養生)” and the practice of “guiding and pulling (*daoyin* 導引)” during periods of poor health, linking them to his pursuit of physical well-being. Later, he used his unsuccessful attempts at life-nourishing practices to caution a disciple in ill health against making the same mistake, which suggests that his subsequent scepticism was rooted in their perceived ineffectiveness rather than religious disillusionment. While Ming-Qing critics attacked Wang for his alleged Daoist tendencies, their critiques rarely addressed the more pragmatic, health-related aspects of his experiences. This scholarly tradition has shaped contemporary debates over Wang's Confucian identity, influencing how his intellectual legacy is interpreted today. Given the long-standing syncretism of the Three Teachings in late imperial China, scholars have long debated the Buddhist and Daoist influences on Confucian thinkers. This paper re-examines Wang's seemingly Daoist activities through the lens of his secular motivations, challenging traditional interpretations of their religious nature. By reframing these practices as pragmatic rather

than religious, it offers a new perspective on Wang's intellectual identity and contributes to the broader study of Confucian thought in late imperial China.

Subversive Representations of Buddhist and Daoist Monks in Late Imperial Chinese Jokes: A Study of *Expanded Forest of Laughs*

Di Zhang, University of Edinburgh

In Ming-Qing popular literature, two starkly contrasting images of Buddhists and Daoists emerge—one idealised, embodying the disciplined, enlightened figures described in Buddhist and Daoist scriptures, and the other deeply negative, portraying clergy as morally corrupt, driven by greed and lust. While extensive scholarship has examined these representations in novels, this study focuses on jokes as a new point of departure to demonstrate the subversive power of humour in reconfiguring their images. Taking the “Daoist and Buddhist” section of the Qing dynasty jestbook *Expanded Forest of Laughs* (笑林廣記 c. 1899) as a case study, this paper explores how jokes—inherently serving as an outlet for repressed human nature and societal satire—offer a unique perspective to subvert the idealised representations of Buddhist and Daoist monks. Do these jokes reflect actual moral corruption among Buddhist and Daoist monks, or are they merely projections of societal biases? Are they responses to real transgressions, or do they signify the lay population's demonisation of religious people? More broadly, what do these portrayals reveal about the intersections of religion, everyday practices, morality, and humour in late imperial China? The study will, on the one hand, examine the increasing secularisation of Buddhism and Daoism during the Ming-Qing period through historical sources, including textual records and legal case rulings. Additionally, it will situate these jokes within the broader literary tradition of erotic stories featuring monks in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Finally, Victor Raskin's theory on the semantic mechanisms of humour will be applied to further illuminate the cultural discourses embedded in these jokes.

A Female Poet, Courtesan, Daoist Nun, Bisexual, and Murderess: The Erotic Remaking of Yu Xuanji in *An Amorous Woman of Tang Dynasty*

Yixuan Huang, University of Edinburgh

In most Hong Kong films with Daoist themes, female characters typically appear as ghosts who are exorcised by Daoist priests. However, *An Amorous Woman of Tang Dynasty* (唐朝豪放女, 1984), directed by Fong Lingching, diverges from this convention. The film reimagines the historical Tang Dynasty figure Yu Xuanji 魚玄機 (c. 844–868) as a lustful, bisexual Daoist nun, indulging her desires. Her characterisation departs from the common trope of a “victim of a man” and transforms into that of a “dominator of men”. Historical records indicate that Yu had been a concubine of a government official before he abandoned her. Later, Yu took up the life of a Daoist nun and went to live in a convent, which was one of the few avenues for women to attain social and sexual freedom. Notably, many Daoist nuns were treated as courtesans, and Yu was no exception. Accordingly, this film focuses on Yu's complex identity as both a Daoist nun and a lascivious courtesan. Therefore, this paper explores whether women can genuinely attain sexual agency through their conversion to Daoism. Does Daoism serve as a utopian refuge for Yu's self-expression, considering her sexuality and female gender consciousness? Or instead, does it function as a form of institutional control over sexual identities and behaviours? When contextualising this erotic film within the socio-cultural landscape of 1980s Hong Kong, I demonstrate that Daoist imagery metaphorically represents a constrained space of freedom—one that offers women an illusory promise of liberation while simultaneously reinforcing a more normative and disciplined space exclusive for heterosexual expression.

H0800 The Past and Present of Taiwan

Information Circulation and Governance in 19th-Century Taiwan: Local Officials and Frontier Policies as the Focus

Wei Wang, National Taiwan University

This study examines the pivotal roles of local officials, including Yao Ying (1785–1853) and Zhao Shenzhen (1762–1826), in shaping governance strategies in 19th-century Taiwan, with a particular focus on the exchange of political information between local officials and provincial authorities. It situates these interactions within the broader political challenges of the Jiaqing (1796–1820) and Daoguang (1821–1850) reigns, often viewed as a period of administrative decline in Qing history. Recent scholarship, however, highlights the Jiaqing emperor's efforts to maintain imperial stability amidst fiscal and social crises. Through an analysis of palace memorials and official correspondence, this research explores how Taiwan's officials developed and leveraged informational networks to address local uprisings, fiscal deficits, and other pressing governance challenges. By integrating frontier and institutional history, this study reveals how governance strategies in Taiwan during the Qianlong-Jiaqing transition were conditioned by and in turn reshaped local politics and socio-economic conditions. In doing so, it offers a reevaluation of the Qing frontier administration's resilience and adaptability during a period of significant crisis, providing new insights into the intersection of central authority and local officials' agency.

Narratives of Self: Constructing Taiwanese Identity through the National Palace Museum's Cultural Tapestry

Jiaqi Wang, Sciences Po Paris

Historically perceived as a symbol of Chinese identity, the National Palace Museum (NPM) in Taipei has uniquely reflected Taiwan's shifting political landscapes, particularly after the Kuomintang's (KMT) martial law ended and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) gained prominence. This paper examines how the NPM, traditionally seen as reinforcing a Sinocentric narrative, is now instrumental in fostering a distinct Taiwanese identity amidst the island's evolving political dynamics. Drawing on collective memory theory, this research addresses how the NPM's role in the identity discourse has shifted from promoting a Chinese-centric identity to supporting the burgeoning Taiwanese self-awareness. The transformation of collective memory at the NPM, catalyzed by the political change from KMT to DPP governance, highlights the museum's shift from a Sinocentric focus to embracing a broader, more inclusive representation of Taiwan's historical and cultural narratives. This shift is particularly evident in the reinterpretation of history within the museum's exhibitions, which now emphasize Taiwan's unique cultural and historical experiences, such as its colonial past under the Qing and its distinct position within a broader Asian context. The paper analyzes how these changes in the presentation of collective memory have contributed to a redefined Taiwanese identity that diverges from traditional Chineseness. By employing thematic and narrative analyses, it investigates the increasing inclusion of Taiwan-centric exhibitions and the strategic use of post-colonial and broader Asian perspectives that highlight Taiwan's visibility and agency, which were previously marginalized in memory narratives in the NPM. This study demonstrates how collective memory can be reconstructed to align with the changing sociopolitical environment and the government's objectives in shaping national identity, highlighting the vital role museums play in this transformation.

Challenges and Decentralisation of the Chinese Postal Service in Postwar Taiwan

Ling-Chieh Chen, National Taiwan Normal University

The Chinese Postal Service (CPS), also known as Chunghwa Post, faced significant challenges post-World War II due to political upheavals and the Chinese Nationalist-Communist Civil War. While striving to restore itself as a unified national organisation, CPS had to navigate a recovering transportation infrastructure and the imminent Civil War. During this period, CPS expanded operations to Taiwan, taking over the postal system established by the Japanese colonial government in 1895. Taiwan was a new postal district for CPS, which had never operated there before Japan's surrender in 1945. The Japanese colonial postal system posed challenges due to its integration of postal and telecommunications services, unlike the separate systems in China. Early post-war Taiwan's postal system faced incompatibility with CPS, and conflicts arose between native

Taiwanese postal workers and mainland CPS personnel due to language and cultural barriers. Despite these challenges, the Taiwan Postal District became a relatively stable postal administration, ultimately becoming the choice for CPS to relocate. The paper explores the incompatibilities and contradictions that arose when Taiwan's postal system was integrated into CPS during the postwar and Civil War contexts, and how these issues affected CPS's management as a centralized national agency. It discusses the complexities of transferring Taiwan's postal administration after 1945, CPS's management in Taiwan, and the conflicts between postal workers from different ethnic backgrounds. The research demonstrates that the dramatic political changes following WWII disrupted postal communication and threatened CPS as a national institution. Although Taiwan's postal district was less affected by the Civil War, the rise of postal labour movements and the Chinese Communist Revolution posed challenges. Ethnic conflicts and labour movements further complicated the situation. However, Taiwan's unique status allowed for a level of operational independence from CPS in mainland China, ensuring uninterrupted postal services domestically and internationally. Thus, Taiwan became a stable refuge for CPS, which relocated its Directorate-General Office to the island in August 1949.

The Pragmatism of Ideology: Taiwan's Overseas Chinese Policy in Malaya and the Republic of Vietnam, c.1949-65

Adrian Kwong, University of Oxford

One central historical development in the Global South in the 20th century was nation-states' 'domestication' (Prasenjit Duara) of transnational connections in societies that had often had fluid, diverse regional and global links. This paper examines Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan) officials' diaspora policy in Southeast Asia in the 1950s-60s as the ROC became a Cold Warrior state on Taiwan. As Taipei's leaders adapted to their reliance on US security protection and Southeast Asia's decolonisation, diaspora policy became a sphere of anti-Communist diplomacy with both Taipei's regional allies and the US. ROC officials courted US support for initiatives in propaganda, education and culture; their propaganda often subtly encouraged audiences to naturalise and cooperate with local authorities. Taipei presented itself as a partner in fighting Communist subversion to regional partners like Malaysia and South Vietnam, in areas such as political warfare and refugee resettlement. Conversely, it restricted transnational connections deemed harmful to diplomatic relations. As local authorities became inhospitable to overseas Chinese loyalty towards Taipei, ROC officials minimised their support for the overseas KMT. Instead, they cultivated ties with elites who could promote intrastate friendship. In contrast to the institutional changes that accompanied the domestication of transnationality in non-aligned and radical states, Taipei's adaptations were often informal and ambiguous in nature. This reflected both its need for diasporic loyalty as a symbol of its legitimacy, given its confrontation with the Mainland; and a more amorphous, administrative approach to statecraft than radical counterparts.

H0802 Mao and Revolutionary Legacy

Revolutionary Style/Natural Style: Building Animal Enclosures at the Beijing Zoo, c. 1952-1960

Yutong Li, University of Cambridge

This study examines the dynamics of socialist spatial production through an inquiry into the design and construction of zoo spaces, particularly animal enclosures, during the Beijing Zoo's foundational years (c. 1952–1960). Drawing on work reports, planning and management guidelines, and contemporary publications, I focus on two key aspects of zoo design: the spatial ordering of enclosures and visitor routes, and the fraught ideation and implementation of a "natural-style" (自然式) design. I interrogate the tensions between the articulated ideals and standards of zoo design and the realities of construction. By analyzing how architects, zoo workers, and policymakers navigated ideological and propagandist imperatives, the well-being of animals, visitor expectations, and material constraints, I reveal the zoo as a multi-layered space where visions of nature and public space were actively negotiated and imperfectly realized in the early decades of the People's Republic, where the very purpose of a zoo remained somewhat unsettled. More broadly, this study

offers new insights into the intersections of environmental imagination, urban planning, and propaganda in Mao-era China.

Exporting Mao: The Guoji Shudian and the Transnational Distribution Networks and Routes through Western Europe (1953–1966)

Luca Nigro, Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, Italy

In December 1949, the Guoji Shudian (国际书店), or International Bookstore, the state-owned book trade organization of the People's Republic of China, was officially established. Its purpose was twofold: to import advanced scientific and technical literature—primarily from the Soviet Union—to support China's economic and social development, and to export political literature, propaganda magazines, and works on socialist construction, particularly those produced by the Foreign Languages Press (外文出版社), to introduce New China to the world. While initially modeled on the Soviet *Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga* and drawing on earlier Chinese practices of foreign-language material during the civil war, Guoji Shudian soon developed its own structure. From 1953, it began targeting Western countries through translation and distribution agreements. One of the earliest involved *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* and the British publisher Lawrence & Wishart. Though short-lived and ultimately unsuccessful, this agreement was foundational, marking the beginning of a broader international strategy that fostered an expanding distribution network for Maoist publications in Western Europe. The dissemination process was complex and often improvised, involving translation (initially also abroad, later centralized in China), revision, shipment, customs clearance, and multi-layered distribution. This shipment machinery engaged a wide range of actors—state agencies, diplomatic posts, foreign bookstores, and local militants—making it both a top-down and bottom-up phenomenon. Routes from Beijing to cities like Cambridge varied widely, sometimes passing through Hong Kong, Bern, Prague, or Paris, which could also act as transit hubs for even more distant destinations such as Havana or Bamako. The Sino-Soviet split both intensified and reoriented these efforts. In Western Europe, and particularly in Italy—home to the region's largest communist movement—the dissemination of Maoist materials was recalibrated. As tensions grew between Mao and Togliatti, the network shifted from official party channels to dissident and grassroots circles, reflecting a broader reconfiguration of ideological alliances and distribution practices. Drawing on British, Chinese, Swiss, and Italian archival sources, this paper examines the material history of a transnational network of Maoist circulation, focusing on Western Europe as one of the PRC's "intermediate zones" of engagement—marginal to its official priorities, yet significant for the diversity of actors involved and the tensions that shaped dissemination from the early 1950s to the onset of the Cultural Revolution.

When the East Wind Blows: Maoist Principles in European Artistic Collectives in 1960-70s

Ruoyi Zheng, University of Manchester

This paper examines how Maoist principles transformed European artistic production during the 1960-70s, moving beyond visual appropriations to analyse the fundamental restructuring of collective artistic practices. The research focuses on the "Atelier Populaire" initiated by École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and Franco Berardi's Mao-Dadaist collective with "A/traverso" periodical and "Radio Alice" in Bologna, revealing how Maoist philosophy reconfigured artistic organisation across these distinct contexts. Against the backdrop of global revolutionary movements, these collectives adopted and adapted Maoist principles to challenge Western cultural paradigms. "Atelier Populaire" emerged during the 1968 Paris uprisings, employing collective production methods without individual attribution. They maintained their position that artworks were "weapons for struggle" rather than aesthetic objects. By incorporating photographic images into political resistance and embedding critiques of mass media, they appropriately embodied Mao's dictum that literature and art should serve the people. Correspondingly, Berardi's 1970s collectives implemented the Maoist principle of "from the masses, to the masses" through innovative media platforms that dissolved boundaries between producers and audiences. A/traverso's open editorial structure and Radio

Alice's participatory broadcasting model exemplified Maoist concepts of self-criticism and the theory-practice dialectic, creating new forms of artistic production that directly challenged capitalist media relations. This research, through analysis of primary archival materials including manifestos, posters, and periodicals, demonstrates how these experimental organisations applied Maoist principles to guide their methods of artistic production and dissemination whilst reimagining artistic creation itself. By examining Maoism as embodied practice rather than mere visual reference, this study enriches singular narratives that view these artistic movements as purely European-derived. This approach enhances our understanding of both these specific movements and Maoist principles' development in Europe, whilst providing historical reference points for contemporary discussions about cultural production and institutional critique.

The CIA's Analysis Into Mao Zedong's Succession and the Cultural Revolution

Nick Miller, University of Edinburgh

With continued questions surrounding the eventual succession of Xi Jinping a look back is needed to see how the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) analysed the succession of China's founder - Mao Zedong. Through the utilisation of declassified documents, a greater insight and new scholarship provides understanding into how the CIA misanalysed the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, Mao's health, succession candidates, and the direction of the country. This presentation will also provide insight into the internal bureaucratic struggles that paralysed the analytical teams leaving the China team set up for failure, ignored, and isolated.

H0803 Guilt, Spirit and Identity Construction

Official Culturalisation Strategies in the Shaping of Mongolian Identity in Inner Mongolia

Yannan Li, Lancaster University

Over the past few decades, China's ethnicities and ethnic policies have become one of the flash points in discussions of China's internal affairs, particularly in the eyes of Western media and the international community. In response to the complexities of ethnic relations, Chinese authorities have adopted a cultural approach to shaping minority identities, aligning them with the state-promoted framework of "unity in diversity" (*Duoyuan Yiti*) — a national identity of the Chinese nation with 56 officially recognised subordinate ethnic groups. Using the ten officially designated cultural symbols of Inner Mongolia as case studies, and drawing on nearly a year of fieldwork and 50 semi-structured interviews, this study examines the implementation of culturalised ethnic strategies in the region. It argues that, on the one hand, the state's emphasis on Mongolian culture has contributed to the partial preservation of ethnic traditions while intentionally integrating Mongolian history and cultural elements into the broader Chinese national narrative to reinforce the notion of "unity." On the other hand, the emphasis on the Mongolian steppe and nomadic culture reflects "diversity". However, Officially portrayed Mongolianness presents rigid and stereotypical nomadism, preventing Mongolian culture from embracing changing times and disconnecting it from urbanisation and modernisation. Static nomadicity brings dichotomous discourses, such as steppe culture versus urbanisation and nomadic versus agrarian, resulting in cultural tensions and anxiety within Mongolian communities.

An Exploration of the Identity Construction of Frustrated Graduates from Elite Universities in China

Chengzhe Yao, Individual Scholar

This study is focus on the identity of frustrated elite university students (so-called 985 losers) in China. In the context of higher education expansion and the highly competitive labor market, social inequality has become a subject of education and sociology concern as well as a scholarly debate worldwide. Mainstream responses focus on the reproduction of social class and culture in the process of education such as Bourdieu and Paul Willis, while the issue is more complex in China, which is ambitious in building a high-quality world-class higher education system (Double World

Class Project). For example, the role of the household registration system and geographical factors cannot be ignored in the uncertain life choices of Chinese youth. Individual education desire is also intertwined with family expectations and official propaganda discourse. The group of graduates from elite universities but frustrated in the labor market develop a resistant discourse system in social media, such as “Lying Flat” and “Involution”. By using an ethnography (fieldwork in Shanghai) and Semi-structure interviews (35 students) as data collection methods, this article will provide a sociological exploration of the current troubles of graduates in the process of looking for jobs. It will produce a rich account of how and why people adopt a specific job search strategy, such as being keen for a stable job although sacrificing three or more years. Also, it aims to reflect the hidden social inequalities of the term meritocracy in the transition of the labor market in a global context.

The Anxiety of “Chan” (忏, Kṣama or “Repentance”): The *Yuju Xinchān* 玉局心忏 as a Confucian Ritual Text for Guilt Elimination

Dingwei Guo, Freie Universität Berlin

The anxiety of “Chan” refers to the sense of unease among the Ming scholar-official class, due to the Neo-Confucian ethical system’s intense focus on the moral self-cultivation of the “inner sage” (内圣), while lacking externalized rituals for the guilt elimination. This unresolved tension became increasingly pronounced and exacerbated by the tightening of internal moral standards, the rise of commerce and shifts in social customs, the challenges posed by Buddhism, Daoism, and Catholicism, as well as the political upheavals of the Ming-Qing transition. Confucian scholars of that time actively constructed discourses and practices related to self-reflection and atonement to compensate for this deficiency. The diverse approaches taken by scholars in addressing their “transgressions”—as well as the ensuing debates—reflected both the increasing religiosity and popularization of Confucianism and the broader anxiety of the Confucian intellectual community in dealing with guilt and repentance. Amid this trend, the *Yuju Xinchān*, which emerged around the 1670s–1680s, played a significant role. The presence of the Buddhist term “chan” (忏 or kṣama) in its title and its intricate connections with existing Buddhist and Daoist ritual texts suggest that it should be examined within the broader intellectual history of transgression and expiation. This study employs intertextuality and the repertoire theory to conduct a close reading of the *Yuju Xinchān* in the *Wendi Quanshu* (文皇帝全书), analyzing its triadic religious elements. It explores how the text appropriates Buddhist penitential rituals and Daoist Wenchang beliefs while reinterpreting Confucian teachings, ultimately crafting a distinctive expiatory ritual that subtly alleviated Confucian intellectuals’ anxieties regarding guilt elimination. By examining the semantic constellation surrounding the text, this study enriches our understanding of indigenous Chinese “chan” practices while prompting a reassessment of the necessity and complexity of the “three teachings synthesis” in the Ming-Qing period.

Zheng qi (争气, striving spirit), The Making of a Revolutionary Emotion

Sijie Ren, University of Bristol

This paper examines the emotional history of Zheng qi (争气, striving spirit), a culturally and politically constructed emotional paradigm that became prominently stabilized during China’s Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Utilizing the analytical framework of the history of emotions, this study explores how Zheng qi was institutionalized as an emotional norm that actively shaped collective identities, prescribing aggressive assertiveness, proactive engagement, and an uncompromisingly combative spirit within Maoist society. Moreover, Zheng qi functioned as a powerful emotional tool to unify the nation by emphasizing collective values and shared goals, reinforcing a cohesive national identity. Additionally, the promotion and institutionalization of Zheng qi represented an intentional process aimed at shaping socialist individuals whose identities and behaviors conformed closely to the ideals of Maoist ideology. It effectively shaped a common group emotion among the Chinese population, fostering collective solidarity and shared emotional experiences across different societal sectors. To some extent, this emotional framework has also shaped contemporary Chinese historical memory, contributing to the nostalgic perception of the

Maoist era as an energetic and positively driven period. During the Cultural Revolution, Zheng qi emerged as a revolutionary emotion strategically promoted by official propaganda, explicitly rejecting skepticism, critical deliberation, and empirical caution. Instead, it demanded continuous striving, aggressive confrontation of challenges, and unwavering dedication to collective ideals. Beyond personal motivation, Zheng qi functioned significantly in mobilizing mass campaigns across multiple sectors, including science, technology, sports, and industrial and agricultural production. Furthermore, it served as a powerful rhetorical instrument in ideological struggles, facilitating mass criticism and attacks against perceived political adversaries domestically and internationally. This study also traces the historical transformation of Zheng qi, noting its early nationalist associations during China's Republican era, when it frequently conveyed collective inadequacy or failure. Under Maoist ideology, however, Zheng qi was redefined positively as an essential revolutionary virtue aligned explicitly with collective identities—dedicated to Chairman Mao, youth, workers, and the nation itself, rather than individual ambition. Importantly, the individuals shaped by this constructed emotional discourse reciprocally reinforced the radical political dynamics and ideological sustainability of the Mao era. Finally, this research highlights the striking continuity of Zheng qi into the post-Mao Reform Era, emphasizing its enduring presence and demonstrating significant continuity in Chinese historical narratives and cultural practices. Thus, Zheng qi represents not only a distinctive Maoist-era emotional culture but also a lasting emotional framework deeply embedded within the fabric of modern Chinese society.

H0805 Platform Change: ‘Social’ Media and Agency in Contemporary China [P]

This panel considers the refashioning of media and their functions in socialist and post-socialist China through propaganda posters, experimental video art, short videos, and multimedia artworks. The changes in different media platforms have transformed and extended the very notion of ‘social’ media, continuously reshaping the way in which people socialise, behave, and participate, thereby forming nascent relationships and interconnections on different media platforms, either physical or digital. In line with Thomas Lamarre’s discussion of “platformativity” (2017: 287) and “extended media” coined by Shiyu Gao (2023), we aim to illustrate how media as independent autonomies have become part and parcel in remaking and/or contesting agencies in the amateur visual production, structure of feeling of immigrants, historiography in commodities and international trades, and virtual art culture. More specifically, in chronological order, Avital Avina looks at the production of amateur propaganda as realised through an analogue ‘social media platform’—the socially constructed and consumed *heiban bao* or blackboard newspapers – and how this microlevel negotiation of communism in the socialist era provided a sense of agency and participation in an otherwise monolithic system. Mingkun Li will explore how the second generation of Third Front workers use WeChat short video platforms to express nostalgia for their past lives in factory communities, a nostalgia not fueled by a longing for the past or future but rather reflecting a deep melancholy stemming from the loss of agency over time due to the regime’s control over their destinies. Yijiao Guo will demonstrate the historicisations of communist human hair during the Cold War in Wang Bo’s *An Asian Ghost Story* (2023) and slime clay on online social media in recent years in Wei Xiankun’s *Slime* (2022), where things reconnect human society and recreate eco-political relations in digital media ecology. Shiyu Gao will conclude with Miao Ying’s multimedia work *Chinternet Plus* (2016), *Hardcore Digital Detox* (2018), and *Pilgrimage into Walden XII Series* (2019–22) to investigate artistic strategies of forming alternative subjectivity to challenge the subtler digital surveillance facilitated by social media in Xi Jinping’s realm.

Drawing Inspiration: Propaganda Poster Reference Materials and the Amateur Artist Avital Avina, SOAS University of London

We often think of the propaganda machine as an unilaterally top-down mechanism, with little input from the masses themselves. However, in Maoist China, amateur propaganda art was not only accepted, it was encouraged. There simply were not enough resources to rely solely on the central

government to supply all of the artwork necessary for propaganda, especially in more remote locations. In order to facilitate creativity within strict confines of an ever changing, and yet rigidly strict political ethos, the CCP turned to an age-old form of artistic pedantry—the art manual, which in the PRC took the form of the Propaganda Poster Reference Material (PPRM). The PPRM served as a way of transitioning the lexicon through already established visual grammar, i.e., they were changing the way it was parsed, not the way it was formed—a micro-level negotiation of communism as it were. This paper will present several important points that can be learnt from these booklets. First, what was acceptable and how the massification of popular propaganda was implemented across such a large state. Second, what themes were acceptable at what times, and through certain information nodes, what were the prevailing ideas, even small seemingly insignificant ones. Many of the later booklets claim to have copied material from official and unofficial propaganda around the country; the material can therefore not only show what was actually being used, but also give us a glimpse into some, perhaps, lost imagery as the posters and blackboard notices were so ephemeral that lasting records are absent. These copies may be some of the only records of unofficial propaganda from an era known for flash changes in iconography and messaging. Particularly blackboard headers, which could be erased instantly, preserved in such a mimetic way, is valuable.

Communist Hair and Xiaohongshu Clay: Remediating History in Digital Things

Yijiao Guo, King's College London

In 1965, the US Treasury Department embargoed hairs from Asiatic regions and required that all human hair items be detected as having a non-communist origin. It led to industrial reconfiguration in Hong Kong and many other East and Southeast Asian US alliances, particularly South Korea and Japan. Around early 2020, playing slime—a soft, viscous jelly-like clay manufactured by the American toy company Mattel—went viral on Chinese streaming media, especially Xiaohongshu/Red Note. Fuelled by the ACG culture, such as video games, virtual interactive images, short videos, and horror films, the spectacle of watching people playing squashy clay soon becomes lucrative and significant in China's E-commerce. The two cases illustrate that the international and transpacific flows of commodities have mapped out new territories that reshape the real and virtual worlds. Such a process of individuation, as Gilbert Simondon and Hui Yuk have it, is influenced by human economic activities but independent from human control. Accordingly, this paper examines how things reconnect human society and recreate eco-political relations in a digital media ecology. Analyses will be given on the wig hairs in Wang Bo's *An Asian Ghost Story* (2023) and the slime clay in Wei Xiankun's *Slime* (2022). Primarily concentrating on the remediation via which digital things associate and interconnect with other digital things in moving images, I argue that, in Wang and Wei's works, the functioning of digital things has transformed from the stewardship of commodities to rhizomic agencies of history-remaking and culture-making.

'Phantom Dreams': Factory Offspring's WeChat Nostalgia Videos for Factory Life

Mingkun Li, King's College London

Modern Chinese working-class nostalgia often centres on the Mao era class struggle (Zeng, 2009; Hurst, 2009; Li, 2021). However, in recent years, a trend of Factory Offspring (厂矿子弟) nostalgia has emerged on platforms like WeChat and Douyin, focusing on 'factory life' from 1970 to 1990, beyond Maoist ideology. Factory Offspring are the second and third generations of communities built around state-owned industries by Maoist migrants, mainly Third Front people. These factories thrived in the 1970s and 1980s but fell into decline after the economic changes of the 1990s. This study explores the Factory Offspring's nostalgia as expressed in their videos and how it differs from Mao-era proletarian nostalgia. After conducting a multi-model analysis of the top 10 videos and comments on the 'Three-Front Factory Offspring' accounts, I concluded that this nostalgia can be described as a 'phantom dream.' They recall the 'rise' of factory life—when people from different regions were sent to desolate areas by the party-state, built factories and infrastructure from

scratch, and created tight-knit communities—and the ‘decline,’ when these factories were abandoned by the party-state, became overrun with ruins, and the people scattered. This nostalgia is just like a ‘phantom dream’, which reveals an indistinct collective pessimistic realisation that the destiny of Chinese people is only determined by the party-state, not themselves. Unlike Mao-era nostalgia, it lacks any political claims but has given up on hopes of transformation or future aspirations, instead portraying a deep sense of ‘loss of agency.’

Artistic Defiance in the Age of Algorithms: Counter-Surveillance in Xi Jinping’s China

Shiyu Gao, University of Edinburgh

The rapid development of digital technologies has increased concerns regarding privacy, data security and the threat of surveillance and censorship, especially within the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Xi Jinping’s rule of China since 2012 has utilised advanced algorithms to expand control over every aspect of daily life with the ever-tightening sphere of censorship and constraint. Social media and innovative technologies, including facial recognition, contribute to the PRC’s construction of a “surveillance culture,” as David Lyon identifies (Lyon 2017, 826), with Chinese characteristics. The PRC’s adoption of new surveillance methods and control mechanisms exacerbates existing asymmetries, including gender, race, and class. The paper focuses on Maio Ying’s (b. 1985) multimedia artworks, including *Chinternet Plus* (2016), *Hardcore Digital Detox* (2018), and *Pilgrimage into Walden XII Series* (2019-2022) to show the artistic strategies to reflect the subtler digital surveillance apparatus rising from ordinary people’s everyday online activities beyond that is being carried out by the government and giant tech corporations like ByteDance. The paper intends to delineate how contemporary artists create alternative subjectivities and identities as a counter-surveillance approach to challenge systemic inequalities and restraints in Xi Jinping’s new ‘digital China.

H0806 From Urban to Rural: Age, Gender and Migration

Affective Exploitation: Structured Melancholy Among Chinese Women Factory Workers

Chengzhi Xiang, University of Bristol

Chinese factories often employ an authoritarian, patriarchal management style and system, the affective nature of which puts young women workers in a pervasive, constant state of melancholy. This state, then, is intensified due to their precarious socioeconomic status. Following a Freudian tradition, melancholy here is defined as a persistent emotional state characterised by feelings of sorrow or longing and related to a sense of loss (Freud, 1917). The study contextualises, unpacks, and understands the structured melancholy among young Chinese migrant women working on the shop floor. It explores the possibility of researching psychiatric concepts from a sociological perspective. Based on the six-month ethnographic fieldwork in an electronics factory in the Yangtze River Delta, China, the study found that the melancholy stemmed from an ongoing living situation of loss underlying these women’s identity as both rural-to-urban migrants and factory workers. Further, I argue that the exploitation of the factory on women workers was highly affective. To better explore the individual and collective emotional worlds, I participated extensively by working alongside my participants in the production line. The ethnographic observation showed that the women workers perceived loss in their bodies, time, and space working in the factory. Also, the shop-floor verbal abuse deepened their sense of loss concerning identity and meaning. They actively withdrew themselves from the affective atmosphere of factory work and resisted the management through multiple strategies, such as media use and building sisterhood. Yet the contingency embedded within the shop-floor sisterhood represented a form of possible loss, therefore arousing a sense of melancholy in return.

A Fluid Culture: The Literature Prospect of Southbound Writers’ Hong Kong Narratives

Mo Li, University of Hong Kong

Over the past century, Hong Kong has experienced five major waves of immigration, cementing its role as a site of cultural reflection for Chinese literati crossing geopolitical borders. This study focuses on migrants who departed the mainland following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, arguing that their experiences would reconfigure understandings of cultural identity formation and interrogate conventional discourses of diaspora within Hong Kong society. By addressing a critical gap in scholarship—specifically, the predominant focus on 1930s–1940s narratives of exile in analyses of writers emigrating from the Mainland to Hong Kong (Nán lái zuò jiā 南來作家)—this research proposes a new framework termed the "Southbound Writers" (Nányí zuò jiā 南移作家), analyzed through the lens of cultural mobility. Through case studies of three generations of Southbound Writers in the 1940s–2020s—Liu Yichang (劉以鬯), Dong Rui (東瑞), and Ge Liang (葛亮)—the study elucidates how these writers construct distinct Hong Kong narratives while navigating hybrid identities shaped by transcultural movement. Their works that traverse cultural boundaries spanning Hong Kong, mainland China, Southeast Asia, etc., reveal an enduring tension between displacement and rootedness. Thus, a subtext of the irremovable paradox underscores Hong Kong's unique cultural landscape, defined by the coexistence of localism and multiculturalism, and highlights this city's pivotal place in the Sinophone world.

A Study on the Resilience of Migrant Families in China

Hui Zhou, University of Sheffield

China's internal migration landscape has shifted markedly from individual labor migration to family migration, as households seek improved quality of life and stability amid growing challenges. Economic pressures and household registration restrictions in major cities have prompted many migrant families to settle in small and medium-sized cities. This study revisits the phenomenon of internal migration in China, exploring how these families navigate the migration process, build family resilience, and resettle in new destinations, with a particular focus on the role of social networks. Data was collected from 53 interviewees and social network diagrams from 31 families, centring on migrant families in small and medium-sized cities—an often-overlooked group facing significant challenges in economics, education, health and social integration. Through qualitative interviews and social network analysis, the study uncovers the primary pressures these families encounter while adapting to new environments and how they leverage family resilience and social networks to cope. By visualizing their social relationships, this study highlights how migrant families rely on family bonds, local resources, and community support to enhance adaptability. Mutual support among family members and social connections within the community play essential roles in maintaining emotional stability and achieving social integration. These findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, emphasizing the critical role of family resilience and social networks in helping migrant families adapt to their new surroundings in those small and medium-sized cities.

Migrant Agency in Variation: Responses of Internal Migrants to a Citizen-Making Initiative in Urban China

Shiyang Chen, University of Liverpool

Since 2011, the Central Chinese government has initiated a 'New Citizenship' campaign, whereby 100 million internal migrants are expected to be granted urban *hukou* and hence entitlements to public services. The 'New Citizenship' campaign has incentivised local governments to establish their own competitive migration programmes, mostly notably through the innovation and proliferation of points-systems in large urban areas. Existing scholarship on migrant responses to the 'New Citizenship' campaign has largely tended to rely on institutional terms in describing migrant experiences, which are typically portrayed as subjected to the inequitable, obstructive, and often non-transparent bureaucratic procedures in the admission of 'New Citizens'. This paper argues that Chinese internal migrants have demonstrated their exertion of agency in response to the state offerings by incorporating a nuanced integration of strategic, emotional and moral action-orientations in Talcott Parsons' terms. Data gathered from a study of migrants residing in Suzhou,

Jiangsu Province, for at least one year indicated that migrant agency was often articulated in ways beyond purely instrumental concerns. Migrants displayed an awareness of diverse values experienced across their *de jure* and *de facto* places of residence, and the ability to strategically position themselves within different relational contexts. Additionally, migrants also exhibited a significant tendency to mobilise an emotional action-orientation when making decisions on instrumental issues, such as whether to apply for urban *hukou* and associated entitlements. Their actions were often self-interpreted as an integrated result of moral consideration based on the value-patterns observed across socio-geographical contexts. Nonetheless, migrant decision-making regarding relocation and resettlement was rarely presented as a one-way or static process, but it rather evolved dynamically under the influence by both the institutional conditions and migrants' own relational networks.

H0807 Education, Intellectual Engagement and the Examination System

Sino-European Intellectual Encounters: Enlightenment Construction of Confucianism and Qing Intellectual Engagement

Xinyao Zhang, University College London

This research explores how Enlightenment philosophers, such as Montesquieu, Voltaire, Raynal, and contributors to the *Encyclopédie*, selectively appropriated Confucianism to articulate critiques of religion, despotism, and moral authority in Europe. Rather than assessing these representations against an “authentic” Confucian canon, the study foregrounds their rhetorical function within internal European debates. It also examines how Qing thinkers, notably Dai Zhen and Ji Yun, responded to both European depictions and indigenous philosophical tensions, engaging Confucianism as a dynamic resource for negotiating epistemological and ethical challenges in late imperial China. Through a comparative intellectual history approach, this research analyses a wide range of primary sources across both traditions, political treatises, encyclopaedic entries, and philosophical essays, alongside canonical Confucian texts. It reconstructs the asymmetric yet reciprocal circulation of ideas, arguing that Sino-European exchange was not a matter of diffusion but of mutual instrumentalisation and conceptual negotiation. By incorporating Jesuit mediation and tracing the evolution of Confucian imagery in Enlightenment discourse, the study reveals how China functioned simultaneously as utopian model and cautionary allegory in the European imagination. Crucially, the research repositions Qing scholars not as passive recipients of Western misrepresentation, but as interlocutors who actively reinterpreted Confucian categories in light of both internal reformist aims and growing awareness of global intellectual currents. This dual-focus framework challenges Eurocentric historiographies and contributes to emerging scholarship on entangled intellectual histories, global Enlightenment studies, and the critical re-evaluation of cross-cultural philosophical exchange. In doing so, the research not only clarifies how Confucianism became a site of ideological contestation across cultures, but also offers a model for analysing non-Western thought as co-constitutive in shaping modern global discourses on knowledge, governance, and moral order.

Metaphors about the Gaokao national exam on Chinese social media

Jiayue Yin, Lancaster University

Studies of metaphor have been conducted across diverse domains of discourse, including politics, health, and advertising. However, very little attention has been devoted to investigating metaphors in discourse around high-stakes examinations (Taylor, 2023). Applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and frameworks for visual metaphor analysis (Forceville, 1996), this study aims to explore how Chinese people use metaphors to discuss the National College Entrance Examination in China (*Gaokao*) on WeChat. The dataset was compiled by collecting WeChat “articles” specifically related to the *Gaokao* drawn from public WeChat accounts from 2021.09 to 2025.08. To select relevant articles, I used the search term 高考 (*gāokǎo*) in the WeChat ‘Search’ space, and then filtered the search results using three criteria: (1) the article was published within

the timeframe; (2) the article's headline included the term 高考; and (3) the article's number of reads reached at least 1,000 by the collection date. This method is designed to generate a dataset of 200 articles across a four-year period. All data were then identified using MIPVU (Steen et al., 2010) for verbal metaphors, and VISMIP (Steen, 2018) for visual metaphors. The analytical approach involves analysing textual manifestations of metaphors (Semino, 2008) and using social actor theory (Darics & Koller, 2019) to see how *Gaokao* participants/actors are represented in metaphor-laden discourse on WeChat. Emerging findings indicate that the *Gaokao* is potentially framed by different source domains (e.g. MOVEMENT, WAR, TOOL, SUPERNATURAL, JOURNEY) to metaphorically represent various aspects of the *Gaokao*, including test-takers (e.g. *soldiers*), preparations (e.g. *sprint*), different regions (e.g. *hell, heaven*), its impact (e.g. *a starting point of life*), etc. Implications will be drawn both for understanding the nature of metaphor use in discussing high-stakes examinations, and for building theory about how metaphor use might shape public perceptions of the *Gaokao*.

An Inquiry into the Phenomenon of "Misaligned Safeguarding" of Rural Cultural Traditions Under the Perspective of Cultural Capital: A Case Study of G Village in Si County, Anhui Province **Jiahui Chen, Beijing Normal University**

This paper examines the phenomenon of "Misaligned Safeguarding" within rural cultural heritage protection under the context of rural revitalization, taking G Village in Anhui Province as a case study. Adopting Bourdieu's theoretical framework on cultural capital, this research employs qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews to uncover cognitive disconnections among various stakeholders and their underlying mechanisms of production. It further proposes potential reconciliation strategies aimed at providing theoretical insights and practical guidelines for the rejuvenation of rural cultures in economically disadvantaged regions through the reconstruction of subjectivity. The findings indicate that there is a structural rupture in perceptions of traditional rural culture among scholars, village councils, and villagers. Scholars tend to stereotype living cultures through external perspectives; village councils transform cultural resources into tools to enhance governance effectiveness; meanwhile, villagers experience diminishing cultural identity due to generational gaps and educational disparities amidst urban-rural development pressures. Additionally, the research highlights inherent contradictions in the internal and external transformation mechanisms of cultural capital. Traditional crafts and other cultural resources are gradually disappearing due to economic stress and generational fractures. Objectification and institutionalization exacerbate symbolic dilemmas, trapping traditional crafts in a crisis characterized by policy enthusiasm but practical indifference. Case studies like Sizhou Opera and medicinal cloth shoes exemplify risks associated with the "museumification" of intangible cultural heritage due to unidimensional capital transformation processes, where the lack of villager participation leads to utilitarianism and hollowing out of cultural transmission. Consequently, this paper suggests a path towards reconciliation through "process-oriented conservation-participatory reconstruction-ecological revitalization", emphasizing the reconstruction of cultural significance networks via dynamic negotiations, and facilitating the re-coupling of cultural genes with contemporary life while recognizing the inevitability of capital transformation.

Harmony in Diversity: Where is the path forward for "Chinese-style" modern education? **Yuhan Wu, Beijing Normal University**

During the process of modernization reform in Chinese education, there is a modern educational crisis triggered by the differences in educational concepts between China and the West. This research aims to discuss the influence of traditional Chinese culture on educational reform and the possibility of implementing a Chinese-style modern education system. Unlike Western educational models, Chinese traditional education centred on Confucian thought. Education in China has been a bond between family and society and the core of political life since ancient times. The character "教" (jiao, meaning to teach) in Xu Shen's Shuowen Jiezi refers to "what is imparted from above is

emulated below (上所施, 下所效)," where those above impart knowledge and those below imitate. From this, we can see that traditional Chinese Confucian education followed a "top-down" natural ontology, seeking a form of freedom that is passively obedient to the state. Since modern times, pure Confucian educational thought has been unable to adapt to the development of the times. Influenced by the scientific trend of Western learning spreading to the East and Dewey's pragmatic educational view, China has built a modern educational system suitable for the times. However, based on China's original ethical-relational-based educational philosophy, it is difficult to fully present the Western free educational model rooted in pure rational philosophy. At the same time, Western education has also presented its unique liberal drawbacks and risks in the process of modernity. These factors have led to the crisis in modern Chinese education. Therefore, in the process of modernization planning, Chinese education is transforming towards a "Chinese-style" modernization as quickly as possible. On the one hand, it embraces the world with an attitude of inclusiveness and integration. On the other hand, it takes a reflective attitude towards cultural integration in the midst of great changes, objectively faces the problems existing in modern Chinese education, and actively seeks a fundamental transformation in ideological values.

H0808 Official and Vernacular Memories in Contemporary China

The state-society relation has been a central paradigm in China studies. Echoing this paradigm, contemporary Chinese memories studies has also highlighted the interaction between the state and society, which shapes various official and vernacular memories in modern and historical China. What is the relationship between official and vernacular memory? What are the factors influencing the interaction between these types of memory? How to theorise the roles of the state and society in Chinese memory studies? In this panel, we explore these questions through a variety of cases in China, including the nostalgia for Kwongtung on Instagram (Yanning Chen), the Ceramic Industrial Heritage Museum in Jingdezhen (Minghe Ma), and Chinese netizens' views towards Russia (Yi Wang). Based on these studies, this panel will also discuss the theorisation of Chinese memory studies (Licheng Qian) and how memories are studied across different disciplines, such as media studies, architecture, sociology, political science, and heritage studies (all panel presenters).

Longing for a Liminal Kwongtung: Transcultural Mediated Nostalgia on Instagram

Yanning Chen, Loughborough University

Continuing the scholarly dialogue on mediated nostalgia as a form of social action that drives change, this presentation further explores its role and functional dimension in envisioning a better political future through the case of nostalgia for Kwongtung on Instagram. Nostalgia for Mainland China's Kwongtung region within a Greater China digital sphere exemplifies a transcultural practice of remembering, where contested historical narratives find expression beyond censored Mainland platforms. This study examines how the Instagram account *The Lost Kwongtung* (逝去的广东 ID: nostalgia.kwongtung), created by the independent media outlet *WhyNot* (歪脑 funded by the US Agency for Global Media), remediates Kwongtung's controversial pasts. Using multimodal discourse analysis, the study explores the account's posts (95, since November 2021) to address the questions: What elements of the past are framed as losses or gains, and how do they project an idealised 'better' Kwongtung—or, by extension, China? The account juxtaposes memories of Kwongtung under various political regimes, celebrating pre-socialist commercial, architectural, and industrial advancements, which were erased in the socialist era (1949-1978). While memories of socialist and post-socialist (1978 onwards) Kwongtung highlight regional achievements, they also critique the erosion of civil society and ethnic culture. Although being critical of cultural and political losses under the socialist regime, the account adopts a neutral tone in recollections of everyday public life, presenting an ambiguous stance on Kwongtung's trajectory. This ambivalence constructs a liminal Kwongtung—an idealised yet unattainable vision of the region, pieced together from fragmented memories of different political eras. Nostalgia for a liminal Kwongtung sheds light on mixed expectations about region's and expansively, the country's political future.

Nostalgia and the State-led Localization of Industrial Heritage: A Case Study of the Jingdezhen Ceramic Industrial Heritage Museum in China

Minghe Ma, Newcastle University

The Jingdezhen Ceramic Industrial Heritage Museum, formerly the Yuzhou Porcelain Factory, was a key workplace under China's planned economy, providing stable employment and social security. In 1990s, economic restructuring led to mass layoffs, erasing workers' jobs, identities, and social networks. Nowadays, the state-owned Jingdezhen Cultural Tourism Group repurposed the factory into a for-profit heritage museum, transforming it from a public workspace into a branded, commercialized cultural site. While the museum preserves the factory's physical structure, it constructs a selective nostalgic narrative that aligns with contemporary tourism and branding strategies. Existing research on industrial heritage has largely focused on preservation, tourism development, and economic benefits, with limited attention to how memory groups respond to these narratives. While critical heritage studies highlighted the divergence between official and personal memory, however, still a lack of systematic research on how groups in post-socialist China express, negotiate, and sometimes contest their memories within state-led heritage projects. Additionally, discussions of ceramic heritage primarily focused on the great narrative of handicrafts after the founding of the People's Republic of China, rather than bottom-up narratives of workers' group memory. Study addressing gaps by examining the museum mediates between official narratives, worker memories, and local community practices, shaping the collective memory of industrial heritage. Using qualitative methods, including archival research, discourse analysis, and oral history interviews, investigates how former workers articulate their memories through diaries, social media, and informal commemorative practices. Examining the construction of nostalgia, authenticity of industrial memory, and the role of state-led heritage management in shaping historical narratives. By exploring these dynamics, contributes to critical heritage studies and industrial heritage research, offering insights into the negotiation of memory in China's evolving cultural landscape. Plus, provides practical implications for heritage management and urban revitalization projects, particularly in balancing historical continuity with contemporary economic needs in post-socialist transformations.

The Divisive Past and the Conflicted Other: How Chinese Netizens View Russia

Yi Wang, University of Birmingham

This study examines how Chinese netizens view Russia and how contested memories shape different perceptions. It categorizes four different perceptions of Russia by pro-Russian groups, "spiritually Soviets," anti-Russian nationalists, and liberals on China's social media, who have divergent interpretations of the past. This study contributes a distinct case to the literature on Chinese collective memory and facilitates an understanding of Sino-Russian relations at the social level. Theoretically, it contributes to the emerging field of memory studies and international relations by highlighting the complexity of the past and the instability between the past and the present. Scholars tend to regard the past as having a "clear" and stable effect on present-day international politics; however, this article finds that when a collective memory concerns multiple significant but symbolically and ideologically competing historical events, it can become a divisive force that creates confusion in the self-other relationship and motivates different social groups to resist and revise official narratives.

Social Memory and China Studies: A Theoretical Analysis

Licheng Qian, Birmingham City University

Despite embracing regional and methodological diversity in recent years, contemporary memory studies have largely remained a Western-centric enterprise. How does the study of memory in non-Western societies differ from the Western experience, and how does it contribute to general theories and methods in memory studies? Based on a systematic review of Chinese memory studies,

particularly in the sociological and historical literature, this article argues that contemporary Chinese memory studies have demonstrated three features, namely the state's constant presence, the adoption of a subaltern stance, and an emphasis on institutional change. By studying mnemonic discourses and practices in Chinese markets and museums, this paper further theorises two roles of the state in shaping memories, that is, the state as an actor and the state as a meta-field, thus contributing to a more theoretical understanding of contemporary Chinese memory studies.

H0809 Linguistic Diversity

The 'Soft Power' of Language(s): Cultural Politics of Representing Linguistic Diversity in CCTV 2023 National TV Host Competition

Hao Xie, University of Warwick

This study explores the cultural politics of language diversity through the multimodal texts of the CCTV 2023 National TV Host Competition, examining how the TV show functions as a vehicle for exerting an inward-looking 'soft power' that reinforces China's nation-building project (Callahan, 2015; Edney, 2012). While much of the existing literature on China's language diversity focuses on policy and socio-historical analysis (Kurpaska, 2019; Liang, 2020; Wong & Xiao, 2010), there is a relative shortage of research on how this diversity manifests in daily television programmes, particularly in entertainment formats. This study aims to enrich this field by critically analysing the representation of languages in the 2023 National TV Host Competition, a major event organised by CCTV every four years since 1988, which has attracted extensive national audience attention. The competition serves as a platform for selecting new generations of television hosts who are both culturally aware and professionally competent. Informed by post-colonial critiques (Gladney, 1994; Said, 1977; Schein, 1997), this research investigates how different language elements—including Hanzi (Written Chinese), Mandarin, regional Han varieties, and non-Han languages—are represented in the programmes. By critically examining these representations, the study highlights the ways in which linguistic diversity is selectively portrayed to reinforce a state-sanctioned version of national identity. While Hanzi and Mandarin are promoted as symbolising national unity and standard, the inclusion of dialects and non-Han languages showcases China's rich linguistic diversity, albeit in a manner that ultimately aligns with state narratives. This study argues that the representation of languages in the competition functions as a strategic tool for exercising internal soft power, reinforcing cultural pride and unity among the domestic Han audience while subtly reproducing a Han-centric and Sino-centric national identity discourse. In doing so, the study contributes to the broader literature on the intersection of language, power, and identity in the Chinese media sphere.

The Linguistic Iceberg Model (LIM): An innovative systemic approach to ecolinguistics analysis of Chinese prefecture-level city work report

Maria Stella Burgio, Foscari University of Venice

In an era of profound climatic transformations for China and for the rest of the world, ecolinguistics assumes an increasingly critical role in fostering constructive and innovative relationships between humanity and the environment, while challenging harmful narratives. However, the complexity of contemporary linguistic systems necessitates a paradigm shift in linguistics analysis moving beyond intra-textual elements, embracing the interplay of multiple actors, temporal dimensions, and contextual forces that collectively shape linguistic phenomena. This dynamic is particularly salient in Chinese programmatic texts as prefecture-level city work reports (市级政府工作报告), where understanding diverse interests, actors, and forces that influence language is essential for assessing their impact on Chinese local society. This research introduces an innovative integration of Systems Thinking (ST) into ecolinguistics, marking a significant shift from traditional linguistic methods. By situating linguistic phenomena within broader systemic contexts, this study proposes a new version of the traditional Iceberg Model (IM) —the Linguistic Iceberg Model (LIM). LIM finds a fertile ground within the Chinese ecolinguistics field since it holistically examines linguistic acts by blending semantic and syntactic structures, production contexts, actor involvement, and cultural influences.

Additionally, LIM underscores the role of mental models (MM) in shaping cognition, bridging cognitive linguistics (CL) and Theory of Mind (Tantucci, 2021) to offer a nuanced understanding of language dynamics. The LIM framework is applied in a corpus-based, ChatGPT-assisted analysis of Chinese prefecture-level city work reports to uncover semantic and syntactic patterns reflecting socio-economic and environmental trends that are reshaping China's local trajectory. To further illustrate the interconnections within linguistic systems, the study employs systemic diagrams, leveraging visual representations to elucidate complex dynamics and abstract relationships. This research highlights the potential of integrating systemic approaches in ecolinguistics, especially in the framework of Chinese Language, to unravel the intricate mechanisms driving language and its impact on society, providing valuable insights into the narratives shaping our collective future.

A Flash in the Pan or A Dream Yet to be Materialised? On Taiwan's 2030 Bilingual Nation Policy **Dr. Eric Chia-Hwan Chen, National Taipei University of Education**

The National Development Council of Taiwan released the *Blueprint for Developing Taiwan into a Bilingual Nation by 2030 Policy* in 2018. This ambitious policy aimed to transform Taiwan into a bilingual nation within twelve years. With the strong support of two successive presidents, Ms Tsai Ing-wen and Mr Lai Ching-Te, various projects were implemented nationwide to ensure bilingual education was available at as many schools as possible. Yet, voices questioning the legitimacy of the policy have never been stopped, given the fact that 87% of citizens support the idea that English should be adopted as the second official language of Taiwan, and 89% of citizens support the idea that bilingual classes should be more widely set up in public elementary and junior high schools. As most schools strived to implement the debatable bilingual education policy, the government unexpectedly made a U-turn about the policy in 2024. It announced that international education will gradually replace bilingual education and become the new direction for future development. In this paper, the researcher will examine various subjective and objective factors that hindered or promoted the implementation of bilingual education in Taiwan over the past eight years.

Queer/ing Translation: Mu Cao and His Poetry **Hongwei Bao, University of Nottingham**

This paper critically reflects on my own practice as a translator in rendering the work of the Chinese queer poet Mu Cao 墓草 from Chinese to English, and ask what makes a piece of translation 'queer'. It will discuss some of the linguistic, translational and cultural strategies that I adopt to render some of the non-normative elements in Mu Cao's poetry across languages and cultures. Drawing on recent scholarship in feminist and queer translation in translation studies, this paper makes an argument for translation as a creative and dialogical process as well as the role of translator's subjectivity and intervention in poetry translation. This paper also introduces the audience to the unique voice of this important Chinese queer poet. Mu Cao (b.1974, Henan, China) is a contemporary Chinese poet and fiction writer of working-class background. As the first openly gay poet from mainland China and known as a 'folk poet' and a 'voice from the bottom of society', his poetry explores queer desire and working-class life on the fringe of Chinese society. A self-taught poet, Mu Cao has published six poetry collections and four works of fiction in Chinese since 1998. His novel *Qi'er* 弃儿 (In the *Face of Death We Are Equal*), translated into English by Scott Meyers, was published by Seagull Press in 2019. His latest publications in Chinese include short story collection *Gudu de bianyuan* (孤独的边缘 *The Lonely Fringe*) and poetry collection *Zai diceng* (在底层 *On the Underside*), both published by Showwe Press in Taipei in 2023. Mu Cao was awarded China's *Jianghu* 江湖 (Freebooters) magazine Underground Poetry Award in 2015 and the Prince Claus Impact Award (the Netherlands) in 2024.

H0810 Art Delivery: From Paintings to History

Collaborative, Circulation and Losing Control: Reorientation of Subjectivity from Museum to Community in *Art Delivery 1.0* to *2.0*

Jiaxin Gan, Pingshan Art Museum

Art Delivery is an art project initiated by the Pingshan Art Museum (PAM) in Shenzhen, China, realized twice in 2023 and 2024. The project has been repositioned from a community-centred project in *Art Delivery 1.0* to a collaborative, community-driven project in *Art Delivery 2.0*, which allows us to explore how art museums engage local communities differently today. In 2023, *Art Delivery 1.0* brought art to five local communities by carrying out workshops and planting DIY toolkit vending machines on sites. In 2024, *Art Delivery 2.0* developed a community collaborative approach. Community is not a subject but the initiative of the project. It called for “ordinary artist” from the community to design and deliver projects while providing support in project planning, institutional connections, and lectures on participatory art practices and relative ethical concerns. Except for the lecture hours, museum staff are largely observers and recorders throughout the process. Eight community-driven projects were carried out, including building oral history archives, designing board games to explore the city, and fibre art installations, addressing issues such as lives of older adults and disappearing traditions. Additionally, an “art market” was designed inside the museum building as a studio space and event space for “one-day art market owners,” largely volunteer and previous frequent visitors, to host one-off participatory workshops without formal training. Using *Art Delivery* as an analytical reference case, I examine how the program’s shift from museum-led to community-driven practices provides a new approach for developing museum-community relationships and thus studying art museum practices in today’s context. Through the lens of new art museum studies, I discuss the realistic problems of building connections with communities beyond simple outreaching and explore a reorientation of subjectivity from institute to community. It provides a reference for sustainable participatory art practices in Chinese art museum discourse.

“Moving Mountains and Filling in Valleys”: *Guohua*, Soviet Constructivism, and the Artist’s Role in Socialist China

Huiyu Cara Zhao, Durham University

This essay explores the reform of *guohua* (traditional Chinese painting) in the People’s Republic of China from 1949 to 1964, focusing on the overlooked relationship between Chinese socialist art and Soviet Constructivism—a key movement within the broader Soviet avant-garde. Drawing from Christine Ho and Gu Yi’s latest publications on socialist *guohua*, the essay builds on recent efforts to reassess the genre not as a site of decline or resistance, but as one of active transformation and ideological negotiation. It argues that *guohua* artists in the early PRC navigated the demands of socialist construction by redefining both their visual language and social function. Through close analysis of major exhibitions, critical debates in journals like *Meishu*, and works by artists such as Liu Zijiu and Li Shuoqing, the essay traces how *guohua* was reshaped to serve the goals of the socialist state. Artists were dispatched to construction sites, participated in manual labor, and produced “construction landscapes” that celebrated industrial modernization—paralleling the practices and ideals of Soviet Constructivists like Aleksandr Rodchenko and Sergei Tretiakov. This essay recovers a previously unnoticed affinity between Chinese *guohua* reform and the Constructivist vision of the artist as producer: a worker embedded in the process of production, rather than a detached aesthetic observer. Building on Walter Benjamin’s 1935 essay “The Author as Producer” and Maria Gough’s reinterpretation of Constructivism, this essay situates Chinese *guohua* within a transnational genealogy of leftist visual culture. By bridging traditional brushwork with socialist themes and realist methods, *guohua* in the 1950s became a medium of aesthetic and ideological experimentation. Recognizing this connection repositions Chinese socialist art within a broader international context, challenging Cold War-era assumptions about its insularity or passive reception of Soviet models.

Writing Chinese Art History in the Early Twentieth-Century China: the Artist as Art Historian **Zi Wang, Beijing Foreign University**

This article contributes to the literature on modern Chinese art through a case study examining the role of artists in shaping Chinese art history during the early 20th century. It focuses on three significant publications: *History of Chinese Painting* (1922) by Chen Shizeng, *On Painterly Methods* (1926) and *A Catalogue of Books on Calligraphy and Painting* (1932) by Yu Shaosong. Employing a theoretical framework grounded in post-colonial views of cross-cultural exchange, including Fernando Ortiz's concept of "transculturation," this article contends that Chen and Yu integrated contemporary Western academic methods, such as world history periodization and descriptive bibliography, into their cognitive reordering of Chinese painting and calligraphy materials. This effort established a novel art historical framework detailing the progressive, linear evolution of Chinese art history. It diverged from the traditional focus on artist biographies and connoisseurship, and had a profound influence on subsequent research. To achieve this, the article begins by examining the transformation of artists into intellectuals, drawing on Chen and Yu's experiences of studying abroad in Tokyo, where they were exposed to advanced European disciplines of history, natural history and art history. Next, it contextualizes the works of Chen and Yu within the academic movement of "reordering the national heritage," highlighting the integration of traditional Chinese art criticism, evidential studies, and a periodization of European history (ancient, medieval, and modern ages) to illustrate how this approach eventually positioned the history of Chinese art within a global context.

Giuseppe Castiglione's paintings: the transformation of European art and the formation of a new genre in eighteenth-century China

Shuwen Wang, Manchester Metropolitan University

In 1707, Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766), a well-trained Milanese painter, was spotted by the Jesuit Order and entered the Jesuit novitiate in Genoa, registered as a novice coadjutor assigned to the Chinese Province. After two years of religious training in Genoa and six years of delay in Portugal, Castiglione arrived in Beijing in 1715, producing various kinds of paintings in the Qing court. Among these artworks, the horse paintings and collaborative paintings with Chinese court painters were considered the most significant masterpieces. The first chapter of this thesis focuses on Castiglione's horse paintings. To demonstrate the significance of the horse paintings for the Qianlong emperor, the chapter analysed the images themselves and the political and military background of the paintings, such as *Qianlong Emperor Riding in Ceremonial Armour* and *Dzungars Presenting Horses to the Qianlong Emperor*, showing the Qianlong emperor's authority and the Qing empire's power. The second chapter explores the collaborative paintings that recorded the scenes of Qing court rituals and components of Manchu identity (shooting, hunting, and horsemanship), illustrating that collaborative paintings were a visual reminder of the Qing court ritual, martial and organisational capacities and how those rituals and abilities were rooted deeply in the Qing empire and Manchu tradition. The third chapter will first examine the influence of European art on Castiglione by comparing his paintings with two of Federico Borromeo's collections, Titian's *Adoration of the Magi* and *Madonna and Child in a Garland of Flowers* by Jan Bruegel the Elder and Hendrick van Balen. Secondly, the third chapter will show that Qianlong's aesthetic taste played a significant role in the formation of Castiglione's painting style by analysing the Qianlong emperor's education. In summary, the study of Castiglione's paintings not only revealed the Qing Empire's political and military symbolism and Manchu tradition but also communicated the art and culture between China and Europe.

10901 Ghosts, Mortality, the Imagination of the Afterlife and Heaven

Mapping the River of Hell: Changing Images of the Afterlife in Chinese Religious Thought

Yifan Li, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich

The river as a boundary between the living and the dead is a recurring motif in global religious traditions. In Indian eschatology, Vaitaraṇī – a river of boiling water, filth, and suffering – serves as a crucial threshold in the underworld. In China, however, the Nai River (奈河) emerged as a distinct yet analogous feature within the Ten Hell Kings system, filled with blood and demonic creatures that

torment sinners. The formation of the Nai River in Chinese eschatology can be understood by first examining pre-Buddhist Chinese concepts of the netherworld spring, particularly *Huangquan* (黃泉). Meanwhile, the Indian *Purāṇas* offer detailed descriptions of Vaitaraṇī as an infernal river flowing at the threshold of King Yama's realm. As Vaitaraṇī was transmitted into China through Buddhist texts such as the *Dīrgha Āgama* and the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, its imagery shaped the evolving imagery of the underworld river in Chinese context. Additionally, the synthesis of Buddhist, Daoist and folk religious traditions gradually led to the conceptualization of Nai River as a river that could be crossed via the Bridge of Helplessness (奈何橋), rather than through a ferryman. By analyzing textual evidence and visual representations, this study traces the formation and integration of Nai River and the Bridge of Helplessness into a structured afterlife geography, and it reveals how these concepts evolved into essential components of Chinese eschatology, shaping popular understandings of judgment, karmic retribution, and posthumous redemption.

Rediscovering Mortality: Philosophy of Life and Death in Early Medieval China

Zixuan Pan, University of Edinburgh

Death is a classic philosophical topic, yet it has to some extent been marginalised in Chinese intellectual history due to a tradition prioritising mortal life and practical concerns. Discussions appear in the manuscripts of a few thinkers—especially Wei-Jin metaphysicians like He Yan, Wang Bi, Guo Xiang, and Seven Sages—whose reflections on life and death were overshadowed by dominant topics of their era. These rediscovered ideas can offer Chinese philosophical perspectives to address modern existential dilemmas, including social transformations and existential anxiety. Focusing on how literati of the Wei-Jin era perceived, debated, and coped with mortality amid political strife and warfare, natural disasters, and social upheaval followed by ethical collapse, this research examines how they envisioned an idealised state of being by separating the dual existence of social identity from authentic self. Through textual analysis and philological tracing of historical literature, complemented by interdisciplinary methods (philosophy, history, and literature), this research reveals how socio-political status may rendered traditional moral norms hypocritical and misaligned with real-life demands. Literati therefore sought peace of mind through the primordial nature (性 *xing*) persisting across human birth to demise, while questioning institutional frameworks and alienation in the face of mortality. Their core categories, like *ziran* (自然 *self-so*) and *li* (理 *pattern*) not only influenced mainstream thought afterwards but also resonate in contemporary life philosophy in China, particularly in reconciling finite existence with transcendent meaning.

Rethinking Xunzi's Argument against "Legendary Abdications": A Focus on the Different Conceptions of "Heaven"

Junbo (Max) Tao, University of Hong Kong

The debate between Mencius and Xunzi on the legends of Yao and Shun's abdications (*Yao Shun shanrang*, 堯舜禪讓) has been interpreted in various ways by generations of scholars. Commonly, it is supposed that Xunzi's argument against such "legendary abdications" is grounded in a critical, oppositional attitude towards Mencius' thought on sage kings. This article boldly supports an alternative hypothesis proposed by Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 and Tan Shaojiang 譚紹江, assuming that the rationale behind Xunzi's comments on "legendary abdications" is to defend and further progress Mencius' political teaching: "the Son of Heaven cannot give the realm to someone" (*Tianzi buneng yi Tianxia yu ren*, 天子不能以天下與人). This article argues that, on the one hand, Mencius and Xunzi have a similar educational purpose: criticizing political hubris and consolidating the Confucian tradition that no mortals can have private ownership of the realm under Heaven with unlimited power and authority. On the other hand, Xunzi's unique conception of a non-intervening Heaven caused a dilemma where he must criticize the legends to preserve the teaching against hubris. Hence, unlike Mencius' reliance on Heaven's supervision and interference as a *Deus ex machina* role in perfecting the sage kings' legends, Xunzi stresses the long-term institutionalization of sage kings'

political arrangements to continuously regulate the ruler's legitimacy mode towards a form of immortality.

10902 Travelling, Exploring and Mapping the China in the Past

Space Constructed by Imagination and Aesthetics: A Case Study of *The Complete Map of Sichuan* in the 1740s

Yuting Zhang, SOAS University of London

The Complete Map of Sichuan 四川全圖, produced during the 1740s, consists of 150 folios, each describing the natural, military and cultural landscapes of a prefecture in Sichuan. The renowned court painter Dong Bangda 董邦達 (1696-1769) led this ambitious project, creating it as a territorial declaration during the First Jinchuan Campaign to console the Qianlong Emperor (r.1736-1796). However, Dong had never been to Sichuan. How could he represent the geography of Sichuan on maps? To answer this question, the paper combines visual and textual analysis to resituate *The Complete Map of Sichuan* in Chinese cartographical history. Maps convey far more than spatial and geographical information. The study of ancient Chinese maps has experienced a remarkable growth over the past decades, though much of the scholarship has focused on cartography, cosmology and administrative transformations. While scholars such as Cordell Yee and Ge Zhaoguang have highlighted the close relationship between Chinese paintings and maps, a cultural approach to understanding Chinese maps remains underexplored. Given the context, *The Complete Map of Sichuan* offers good examples to reexamine the Qing maps. When a large number of cartographical and precise maps emerged during the Ming-Qing period, Dong's maps stand for the aesthetics and sensibility. Therefore, it argues that the evaluation of Chinese maps should not be limited to cartography and technology, but also consider the unique tradition of "art as maps." The reciprocal dialogue between paintings and maps fosters a distinctive pictorial-cartographic language, providing readers with an engaging travel experience.

China in the Travel Literature of Brazil and Portugal: The Case of the Diplomatic Missions of the 1880's

Bruno Pontes Motta, University of Lisbon

In the years 1881 and 1887, Brazil and Portugal respectively sent special diplomatic missions to negotiate a treaty with China, which was then under the Qing dynasty. As secretaries of these missions were two aristocrats: the Brazilian Henrique Carlos Lisboa and the Portuguese Bernardo Pinheiro de Melo (the future Count of Arnoso), who, years after their diplomatic endeavors, went on to write about their journeys. In 1888, Henrique Carlos Lisboa published *China and the Chins: Travel Recollections* (*A China e os Chins: Recordações de Viagem*, untranslated), while, in 1895, Bernardo Pinheiro de Melo published *Journeys Throughout the World* (*Jornadas pelo Mundo*, untranslated). Both books were published in a very significant editorial moment: for the Brazilian, due to the issue of Asian labour following the abolition of slavery in that same year, and for the Portuguese, due to the Sino-Japanese War that caught the attention of many in the world. In their books, they recounted their experiences and impressions of China and the Chinese people, offering insightful reflections and conclusions. That said, these two works are the focus of this study, which is organized from a comparative perspective and structured around three key points for analysis: (1) the historical context of the authors, their journeys, and the publications; (2) the structure of the books and the themes they addressed (as well as those they did not); (3) the authors' viewpoints and their motivations, as discernible in their terminology, references, and narrative strategies. Based on this analysis, we can gain an understanding of the Luso-Brazilian perspective on China and the Chinese at the end of the 19th century and contribute to the academic discussion on China in Western travel literature—an area traditionally focused on texts written in English or French.

Joseph Needham and Rewi Alley's Scientific and Cultural Exploration in Northwest China During World War II

Qibo Mei, Zhengzhou University

In 1943, British scientist Joseph Needham and New Zealand social activist Rewi Alley embarked on a journey through northwest China, promoting scientific and technological practices and production innovations amidst wartime challenges. Through scientific expeditions and industrial cooperation, respectively, they played pivotal roles in advancing these areas. Needham conducted systematic research of northwest research institutions, documenting the resilience of traditional Chinese technologies. Meanwhile, Alley's "Industrial Cooperation Movement" fostered technology localization and wartime economic self-reliance through cooperative models. Their collaboration and research endeavors in Gansu, the Thousand Buddha Grottoes in Dunhuang, and other regions exemplified the wartime integration of science, technology, and production, significantly boosting regional modernization and altering international perceptions of China's wartime efforts. This study unveils the historical logic behind their cross-cultural collaboration, offering a novel interpretive framework for crisis-driven modernization.

Repatriating *Huaqiao* from China in the Early Postwar Period (1945-1950)

Xian Yu Jee, Royal Holloway

As the Japanese advanced into Southeast Asia in WW2, the mobilities of *huaqiao* (华侨 Overseas Chinese) were changed. From a theoretically circular pattern of labour-commercial migration, these networks were now infused with an exilic character, if not outright broken and reshaped by the Occupation. In British Malaya, while most *huaqiao* found themselves trapped within the “slaughter-house” of the Japanese Occupation, a sizable portion managed to escape to Mainland China. At war’s end, *huaqiao* prepared to return home to Southeast Asia, hoping to quickly resume their lives and businesses. From 1945 to 1950, this was done under the auspices of the Kuomintang (KMT) government and the colonial Southeast Asian governments. Some *huaqiao* were well-off and completed their own returns, others had to rely on the efforts of states and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) to do so. Material conditions were a constant obstacle, with the loss of valid paperwork. However, the early stages of the Cold War influenced immigration policy, with reception of returning *huaqiao* varying between different administrations – Burma notably erecting several “paper walls”. KMT policy that sought to reassert its support amongst Overseas Chinese was also an obstacle, and ironically the ever-present *huaqiao* leaders such as Tan Kah Kee could be uncooperative. Nonetheless, by 1947, *huaqiao* repatriation was regarded as a success by several colonial authorities. This paper is derived from my thesis on the evolution of *huaqiao* aid networks in British Malaya. Taking a transnational approach to the mobilities of *huaqiao*, it plunges into British archival sources, particularly the FO371 (Foreign Office: Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906-1966) on *huaqiao* repatriation and Kunming news correspondences. This paper also examines the oral history collections of the National Archives of Singapore, in particular *huaqiao* exiles/war volunteers and their efforts at completing repatriation for their compatriots.

10903 Beyond Bitterness: Strategies for Reclaiming the Present in Contemporary China (Part I: Migration and Mobility) [P]

As a narrative trope mobilized by both the party-state and ordinary Chinese citizens throughout the PRC, “eating bitterness (*chiku*)” signifies the necessity to sacrifice or even suffer in the present for imagined future rewards. Institutionalized as a revolutionary virtue during the Mao regime, *chiku* in the post-marketization era was reframed as within a neoliberal logic that justified self-sacrifice in the name of personal success, upward mobility, and wealth accumulation. However, our own anthropological research with contemporary Chinese migrant labourers, backpackers, and rural ‘return youths’ made us question the ongoing place of *chiku* as a unifying work ethic or moral framework in contemporary China. Instead of striving subjects who “reduce the present to an empty vehicle to the future” (Xiang 2021) by committing to the “temporal mode of ceaseless striving” (Hansen 2015), those who question eating bitterness seek to dwell in the present through new practices of (un)production, (im)mobility, self-cultivation, and re-examinations of family and social

relationships. Such a diverse range of undertakings to engage with the here-and-now came to form what we call “strategies of reclaiming the present.” In the first panel we will explore the embodied and critical dispositions adopted by Chinese urbanites, including IT workers moving from ‘wolf culture’ to ‘dog culture’ (Liang), young mothers ‘sitting the month’ (Ge), and then ‘lying flat’s resonances with zero-waste living (Lora-Wainwright, Johnson, & Wong), and apartment buyers who “lie flat” in a rustbelt city (Tang). The second panel explores the role of mobility in strategies to reclaim the present, including middle class migrants' quest for the good life in Portugal (Cojocar & Wang), intergenerational value change among migrants from Zhejiang in Europe, and then new lifestyles of Chinese backpackers (Stapleton), and the contemporary transmission of Tujia cultural heritage (Caruso).

Group A

‘And Then You Look Up at the Sky and It Is Blue!’: Changing Imaginaries of the ‘Good Life’ Of Chinese Youth in Portugal

Olga Cojocar, ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon

Xuheng Wang, ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon

Disillusioned with the promise of deferred gratification, many Chinese youths embrace the ethos of being well in the present. In contrast to the deeply ingrained model of social competition and self-sacrifice for a better future (often referred to as “involution”), many young Chinese pursue an alternative path that prioritises wellbeing, autonomy, and a healthy lifestyle over relentless striving and the pressures of meeting traditional life milestones. This tendency is evident in lifestyle migration patterns, where Chinese youth with passive income or student visas move to Europe not merely as a strategic investment in future mobility but as a deliberate pursuit of a more balanced and enjoyable present. Drawing from 27 in-depth interviews with middle-class Chinese migrants in Portugal, this paper explores how Chinese youth reorient their aspirations from long-term career and financial success to a focus on present wellbeing and fulfilment. Post-material motivations such as clean air, proximity to nature, and food safety feature as central tropes in their decisions, reflecting a shift in the imaginaries of the “good life”. Whether taking a gap year in Portugal, postponing marriage and parenthood, or enacting a slower pace of life, these youth reject the logic of involution, reshape their life trajectories, and experiment with alternative ways of living - where, metaphorically, but also quite literally, blue sky, fresh air, and nature emerge as symbols of an alternative, more liveable present.

From *Chiku* to *Tiaozhan*: Zhejiangese Migrants Rethink Suffering, Success and Sacrifice

Teresa Irigoyen-Lopez, University of Oxford

In the 1980s and 1990s, large waves of labor migrants left southern Zhejiang for Europe, establishing restaurants, supermarkets, and wholesale businesses while supplementing key local industries (e.g., coffee houses and textile factories in Italy, bazaars in Spain, retail in France). For this first generation, Europe was never an endpoint but a transitory space for wealth accumulation (赚钱 *zhuanqian*). Working tirelessly—often 16-hour days, seven days a week—they exemplified *chiku* (吃苦), where present suffering was justified by future security. However, after decades of relentless labor on the margins of their host societies, many now critically reassess its meaning, particularly as they contend with their children’s rejection of the same ethic of sacrifice. This paper explores how first-generation migrants reinterpret *chiku* as they transition from struggling workers to aging entrepreneurs, transnational property owners, or, most relevantly, returnees to China. While they once embraced *chiku* as necessary, many now question its value, especially as they witness their children—raised in Europe—resist following in their footsteps of gruelling work and aspire to careers emphasising self-fulfillment over financial security. Faced with this rupture, this paper argues, first-generation migrants increasingly reframe *chiku* as *tiaozhan* (“challenging oneself”)—a discourse that allows them to preserve the dignity of their struggles while adapting to new realities, emphasising struggle as a form of self-cultivation and personal growth rather than mere survival. Based on over 15

months of fieldwork in Qingtian (southern Zhejiang) and shorter ethnographic research in European host countries, this paper examines how first-generation migrants articulate these ideological shifts through everyday narratives, financial decisions, transnational family arrangements, and aspirations for retirement. Their children's reluctance to inherit businesses and pursuit of non-traditional careers, as well as their differentiated non-material efforts to reclaim their transcultural identity, have pushed them to redefine the moral meaning of suffering.

Group B

Navigating Constraint: The Lives Of A Few Aesthetes and the Cult of Nature in Tujia Neofolklorism Giacomo Caruso, Hubei University for Nationalities

The *Enshi* region in western Hubei has long been a sui generis region: for its geographic marginality, for its ethnic variety (dominated nowadays by Tujia and Han people), for its distinctive regional culture. This marginality still produces young livelihoods that to a certain extent follow the mainstream values of the Han-dominated majority, especially regarding a model of education and self-sacrifice in work and life that is imbued with Confucian values and the abnegation to a real or presumed "national spirit" of liberation and eternal disengagement from the wounds of the colonial period. More recently, typical industrial or capitalist competitiveness and individualism dictated by the consumerist era has even increased this sentiment of "eating bitterness for survival". I investigate in this article the livelihoods of certain young artists in *Enshi* City which contest this survival of the fittest of dangerous Darwinian memory, and model their lives on other values, in a subtle and non-declared way. They live freely, quite extravagantly, do not concern themselves about marriage or postpone it, they love nature and aestheticism, they frequent spaces imbued with modern artistic forms, and resemble the Dandies of another era of disillusionment. I believe their values, their novelty and their continuity with certain movements of neofolklorism, neo-vernacularism, and the current Chinese policy on intangible cultural heritage marketing and preservation, are certainly instructive to understand deep changes in Chinese society and certain influences of global consumerist trends.

Desirable Differences: Backpackers 'checking in' at a Chinese Temple in Dar es Salaam Theo Stapleton, University of Cambridge

Tanhua Temple is located in the largest city in Tanzania, Dar es Salaam, a popular stop for travellers. The temple sits on a beachfront property next to a large Chinese run complex with apartments, shops, supermarkets, restaurants, and a luxury hotel in a well-to-do coastal neighbourhood a short drive North from the city centre. While I was conducting fieldwork in 2022-23, *Tanhua* Temple became known to a new generation of globally mobile Chinese travellers who came to volunteer for days, weeks or months at a time on their journeys through the region. As *Tanhua* Temple hosted a diverse cross section of university students, artists, essayists, vloggers, and backpackers, it became a place to "check in" (*daka*). This paper explores the unique perspectives of these young travellers who visited *Tanhua* Temple, based on ethnographic observations during their stays at the temple, analysis of the online content that they produced about their travels, and through semi structured interviews conducted after fieldwork. I argue that the plurality of ethical discourses in China today has led my interlocutors to think about values as a personal choice. All of them emphasised the personal nature of their travel choices, a style of travel that values autonomy, genuine interactions, and on an even more abstract level, valorises the experience of difference itself. Individualisation, a process well described in the China literature, has made many young people sceptical of 'one-size-fits-all' approaches, including the traditional values of family, the increasingly 'involved' contemporary workplace and systems of organized religion. They were also sceptical about generalising terms like *tangping* or *foxiqingnian*. Prompted by their own accounts, I argue that their approach reveals a pursuit of 'civic intimacy' and creates what Ning & Palmer (2024) have called a 'micro-civil sphere'.

10904 Resistance, Reconstruction and New Invention

Visualizing China: Collective Participation and Reconstruction of National Identity in Chinese Gaming Communities

Siming Huo, University of Sheffield

With the rapid growth of the domestic game market, nearly half of the population now identifies as gamers. However, their voices remain largely overlooked in mainstream discourse. This paper explores the potential of “play” as a form of political expression for Chinese youths. Based on interviews with 40 Chinese gamers and digital ethnography on the gaming communities of popular games like Black Myth: Wukong and Genshin Impact, this paper explores how Chinese cultural elements embedded in games’ designs, such as scenarios, music, mechanisms, and narratives, serve as the reminders of banal nationalism, as Billig proposed. This paper argues that while these cultural reminders are often subtle, they can foster a sense of shared national identity among gamers. By engaging in gaming and online discussions, gamers’ personal nationalist sentiments could transform into visible forms of collective expression. However, this paper also identifies a paradox: while Chinese gamers spontaneously promote the government’s discourse of “cultural export” to demonstrate the international influence of domestic games, other radical gamers criticized game companies for tampering with the purity and superiority of Chinese culture in games’ presentation. This paper further argued that both confidence in and anxiety about Chinese culture could coexist in gamers’ imagination of a virtual national image, with video games and gaming communities providing an interactive medium and a public sphere for gamers’ collective nationalist expression.

Between Compliance and Resistance: Chongqing’s War of Resistance Memory in China’s Authoritarian Memory Regime

Sitao Deng, University of Oxford

After being suppressed for nearly 30 years, the War of Resistance resurfaced in the collective memory of the Chinese people during the 1980s. As a symbol of Chinese nationalism and national spirit, the CCP defined and redefined the “memory regime” of the war to align the people’s identities with contemporary political objectives and the socio-economic backdrop. The effectiveness of the War encouraged local governments to create their own local memories of the War to maximise local interests. This article focuses on Chongqing’s historical narrative of the War of Resistance, investigating how the local government constructs its own memory of the war, simultaneously resisting and complying with the national narrative. Through content analysis and historical research, I investigate three media—museums, local history textbooks, and official periodicals—to uncover the mechanisms of narrative production and their alignment with or divergence from national templates. The study identifies five distinct narrative patterns in Chongqing’s wartime memory, ranging from CCP- and KMT-centred narratives to those emphasising local experiences beyond party conflict. These narratives reveal how local governments employ flexibility and adaptation to balance national censorship with local interests, utilising spatial, temporal, and media strategies to reframe historical memory. I argue that the national narrative serves a dual role: it sets the framework for local narratives while simultaneously provoking alternative interpretations. By combining synchronic and diachronic analyses, this research demonstrates how Chongqing’s multi-faceted political identity enables the production of contested narratives, shedding light on the dynamic interplay between national and local historical memory. The findings contribute to broader debates on subnational agency in authoritarian systems and the role of historical narratives in shaping central-local relations. Ultimately, this study offers insights into how local governments in China negotiate narrative power, with implications for the future of alternative historical memories in China.

Reconstructing 1980s Rural Women: The Platformisation of Nostalgic Femininities on Chinese Social Media Platform Kuaishou

Ran Yan, Shenzhen University

This article investigates how Chinese rural female influencers aged 40 and above construct their 'ideal femininity' through self-generated nostalgic mini-series and livestreams. Short videos and livestreams have become prominent forms of digital media consumption among Chinese rural social media users. The short video platform *Kuaishou*, in particular, attracts an initial user base from lower-tier cities and rural areas. In recent years, a noticeable number of rural female users have become 'duanzi' (段子, short performance) influencers on this platform, where they sell rural products by producing mini-series and livestreams that depict rural women's marriage and family life in the 1980s. The key research question of this study is: to what extent do these rural female influencers' nostalgic productions and the viewers' responses challenge or perpetuate gender hegemony? Building on Svetlana Boym's notion of 'reflective nostalgia', this digital ethnographic research develops the concept of 'platformised nostalgic femininities' to unpack how these rural women actively exercise their digital agency by critically and reflectively reinterpreting the past as part of their self-reconstruction. I argue that the femininity representations in these nostalgic productions, as well as the viewers' responses they evoke, demonstrate sensibilities of pseudo-feminism, characterised by a discourse of duality. On the one hand, economic independence is portrayed as a remedy for failed patriarchal marriages. On the other hand, rural women are simultaneously encouraged to adhere to femininities that align with traditional family values. Ultimately, these productions and responses become the accomplice of patriarchal values. The conceptualisation of platformised nostalgic femininities highlights how memory capital is leveraged by aged rural female influencers as a resource for performing and negotiating their gender subjectivity in the digital age. In doing so, this research complicates existing understandings of gender power relations in Chinese society.

10905 Chinese Cities, Regional Problems and Geographic Mobility

Theatre as Business: A Study of the Triangular Relations among Shanxi Merchants' Business, Theatre Sponsorship and Social Status in Late Imperial China

Yunjie (Lisa) Hu, University of Sydney

Shanxi merchants were one of the most powerful merchant groups that rose in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). In the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), the late Qing in particular, Shanxi merchants' business reached its peak. They dominated the market in northern China and established the first banking industry in the country. Apart from their success in business and enormous fortune, Shanxi merchants were also famous for their passion for *xiqu* (戏曲 traditional Chinese theatre) and for their sponsorship of Shanxi regional theatre, especially *bangzi* (梆子) or clapper opera. Shanxi merchants established stages in their guildhalls and mansions, invited Shanxi local troupes to perform at bustling market towns during their guild meetings and social gatherings, and entertained social elites with theatrical performance from time to time. China was historically an agricultural society where literati ranked at the top of the traditional Chinese social hierarchy, while merchants were placed at the bottom, according to Confucian and Legalist ethos. This presentation reveals that the underlying reason for Shanxi merchants' theatre sponsorship was their pursuit of wealth, influence, fame and higher social status. Theatre sponsorship helped Shanxi merchants achieve business success, maintain a close relationship with the ruling class, enhance their social standing and manifest their newly acquired higher status. This presentation also shows a divergence of opinions on the primary intention of merchants' consumption of cultural products and engagement in cultural activities, which was social emulation by nature. The once-popular idea 'merchants as déclassé and scholars as exalted' came to be held by the literati alone and was a futile defence that merchants did not care much about at the dusk of the imperial era.

The Crisis of Ultra-Low Fertility in Northeast China: Micro and Macro Determinants in Jilin City

Kaicheng Zhang, University of Sheffield

China's fertility rates have fallen significantly over recent decades, with the Northeast region experiencing an especially severe decline, even amid shifts from a one-child to multi-child policy.

This study focuses on the reproductive-age population in Jilin City, Northeast China, examining both micro-level factors from an individual perspective and macro-level influences, including economic, cultural, and environmental conditions, to uncover the deeper, underlying reasons shaping fertility intentions. To capture a comprehensive understanding of fertility preferences and influencing factors, this study conducted field research in Jilin City, selecting three distinct types of urban districts to ensure diversity in economic and social backgrounds. A total of 608 reproductive-age individuals were randomly surveyed, followed by in-depth interviews with a subset of 30 participants. This mixed-method approach allows for both a broad statistical analysis and a deeper qualitative exploration of personal experiences and societal influences. Findings highlight that while traditional norms around family size and gender persist, economic pressures—such as housing costs, childcare expenses, and job instability—play a decisive role in fertility decisions. The study reveals that government policies alone are insufficient to counter the demographic decline, as they fail to address the root economic and social challenges unique to Northeast China. By situating the region's fertility crisis within broader economic and cultural frameworks, this research contributes to the understanding of regional demographic dynamics and offers actionable insights for policymakers.

Transitional Justice with Chinese Characteristics: 'Lenient Handling' and Post-Cultural Revolution Settlements in Guangxi

Guoqing Song, Anhui University

After the official end of the Cultural Revolution in October 1976, the question of how to deal with those responsible for past injustices came to the fore for the Chinese Communist Party who renewed its claim to the rule of China. In a detailed examination of the Guangxi Autonomous Region settled accounts with perpetrators, this article analyses three major methods of retribution: disciplinary sanctions, criminal prosecution, and informal sanctions. It argues that in order to maintain both party and administrative cohesion and respond to the popular desire for justice, the party leadership made enormous efforts to punish the perpetrators of historical injustices. However, the party had to rein in the retribution and turned it to a milder approach, given the risk of endangering regime stability - a large portion of incumbent party cadres and ordinary functionaries had been implicated in the atrocities. The main approach to retribution, namely criminal prosecution, was applied selectively and parsimoniously in the process. Relatively lenient measures, however, were extensively meted out and became the party's preferred approach when reviewing the cases of perpetrators. This comprehensive but mild approach was chosen because of the political and collective character of the wrongdoings, sharing similarities with other cases of classical transitional justice processes. It turned out to be crucial in ensuring regime security and served as the initial step for promoting reconciliation within the divided society.

10906 Chinese Intellectuals in the Long 20th Century [P]

This panel brings together a diverse range of studies on Chinese intellectuals spanning generations of the long 20th century - ranging from the late Qing period to the Cold War. The papers explore how intellectuals engaged in the entangled processes of knowledge transformation as they navigated the challenges of modernity. Amid global knowledge circulation, these intellectuals reconceptualised key ideas such as time, identity, and historiography. Starting with Weng Haifeng's study on the reconfiguration of Bergson's philosophy in the Chinese context, he demonstrates how He Lin's concept of 'Supra-spacetime' reinterprets Bergson's philosophy by merging duration and intuition with Confucian ethics. This fusion offers a novel framework to address the ethical crisis brought about by a new understanding of time. Moving from the transformation of philosophy to the field of historiography, Du Zeyu examines how Yu Ying-shih drew on the concept of 'anti-intellectualism' from his experience as a PhD student in the U.S. to reassess Chinese political thought and the transition of Neo-Confucianism. Focusing on identity formation and intellectual trajectories shaped by transnational encounters, Chen Zhenxin compares two central intellectuals in Chinese intellectual history, Liang Qichao and Fu Sinian. Both were deeply influenced by extensive global

travels and cross-cultural exchanges, which helped them redefine Chinese selfhood and modernity through the interplay of indigenous traditions and Western thought. From a different perspective, focusing on Sichuan's local tradition of Daoist and Confucian syncretistic thought, Felix Erdt examines how Liu Xianxin critically responds to Western historiography by rethinking the ethical role of historians and articulating a vision of cosmological cyclical change in response to global crises. Together, these papers illuminate the complex interplay between transnational intellectual currents and indigenous thought, shedding light on how Chinese intellectuals, across generations, have contributed to the reimagining of Chinese identity and modernity.

Confucianizing Bergson: He Lin's Concept of 'Supra-spacetime' in Global Entanglement and Knowledge Genealogy

Haifeng Weng, University of Göttingen

The early 20th century marked a critical transformation in China's time consciousness, as Confucian moral frameworks based on cyclical temporality encountered the rise of linear time. This shift challenged an epistemic legitimacy of Confucian ethical knowledge from historiography, compelling Chinese intellectuals to seek new conceptual foundations. My research examines this epistemic transition through the intellectual genealogy that connects Zhang Dongsun, Liang Shuming, and He Lin, culminating in He Lin's formulation of "Sur-spacetime" as a Confucian re-interpretation of Henri Bergson's philosophy. Employing Reinhart Koselleck's conceptual framework of experience space (Erfahrungsraum) and horizon of expectation (Erwartungshorizont), this study explores how Bergson's philosophy—particularly his notions of duration and intuition—was appropriated in modern Chinese thought to reconfigure ethical knowledge beyond historicist constraints. Zhang Dongsun's 1919 translation of *L'Évolution créatrice* (Creative Evolution) introduced Bergsonian concepts to Chinese intellectual circles, prompting a re-examination of "xin" as a bridge between intuition and moral knowledge. Liang Shuming further developed this framework in *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies* (1921), positioning intuition as the defining characteristic of Chinese philosophy and reinforcing its supra-temporal quality. Building on these intellectual currents, He Lin synthesized Confucian ethics with Bergsonian intuition to construct his theory of Supra-spacetime, a concept aimed at modernizing Wang Yangming's moral philosophy within a global epistemic landscape. By situating He Lin's Supra-spacetime within a broader history of knowledge framework, this study highlights the transnational entanglements of epistemic concepts and their role in reshaping moral and temporal understandings in modern China. It demonstrates how knowledge circulations across cultural and philosophical traditions led to innovative reformulations of ethical legitimacy, positioning He Lin's synthesis as a case study of Confucianizing Bergson within a global history of ideas.

Why Did Liberalism Fail? The State Building of Modern China Through the Eyes of Liberal Intellectuals.

Zhenxin Chen, Freie Universität Berlin

Chinese intellectual historians have widely accepted Zhang Hao's (1999) concept, 'The Transformation Era of Modern Chinese Intellectual History,' arguing that the 30-year period from 1895 to 1925 was a critical phase in modern China's transition from tradition to modernity, marked by the rise of the intelligentsia and new media. During this period, intellectuals with Confucian education and overseas experience played a key role, and generational differences might be an insightful perspective to understand their evolution. Furthermore, historians also increasingly adopt a global history perspective, recognising the interplay of ideas through travel, encounter, translation, and hybridisation. Liang Qichao (1873-1929) and Fu Sinian (1896-1950), two generations apart, were key figures in modern China's intellectual and political landscape. Liang, exiled after the failure of Hundred Days' Reform in 1898. Over next two decades, he not only interacted closely with Chinese political elites, but also travelled to Japan, America, Australia, and Europe, where his ideas evolved significantly. Fu, a student leader of May Fourth Movement in 1919, later rejected radical revolution

in favour of gradual ideological change. In 1920, He decided to study psychology and social sciences in Britain and Germany. Both Liang and Fu developed distinct perspectives on historiography, nationalism, role of intelligentsia, as well as their self-identity as Chinese intellectuals, during their overseas experiences. Despite their differences, both hesitated with tensions between politics and academia, Chinese tradition and Western knowledge, and shaping their views on China's global positioning. A comparative study of Liang and Fu can enrich our understanding how Chinese intellectuals navigated modernity and redefined China's role in an interconnected world.

A Voice from the Periphery: Liu Xianxin, a Confucian-Daoist Scholar from Sichuan and His Response to Modernity

Felix Erdt, Academia Sinica

The discussion of global knowledge transfer in China often focuses on intellectuals who have had experiences abroad and were part of the newly emerging academic system in China. While this is an important area of research, I want to highlight a different case of global knowledge transfer through the example of the Sichuan scholar Liu Xianxin (劉咸炘, 1896–1932). Liu never left China during his lifetime and, instead of pursuing an academic career, was a member of a local Daoist-Confucian group. Although he died in his 30s, he left behind an astonishing body of scholarship on various topics, including historiography, the Chinese classics, and contemporary political and philosophical issues. It was likely this very independence from academic institutions that allowed him to engage with fundamental questions about historical change and human agency in innovative ways. He drew extensively on cosmological ideas of change from the Yijing and other Confucian and Daoist texts. In this presentation, I will focus on his discussion of the ethical role of the historian and his cosmological views on cyclical change. These perspectives must be understood as a response to debates on the linearity of time and the challenges it posed to human agency in history in Republican China. Far from an ivory tower of erudite scholarship, Liu sought to address the pressing issues of his time by referring to traditional concepts of change and human agency, presenting an alternative channel of global knowledge transfer outside the circle of university-trained intellectuals.

10907 Governance, Inspection Tour, and Nationalist Sentiments

Mazu Temple, Ritual and Community: The Role of Cultural Heritage in Village Governance on Meizhou Island

Yuxin Fu, University of Oxford

Mazu, the Goddess of the Sea, who was born on Meizhou Island, is a central figure in Chinese folk religion, particularly in coastal communities such as Fujian Province. Mazu temples on Meizhou Island serve not only as spiritual centres for worship but also as social hubs for community engagement, playing a crucial role in village governance. This paper explores how temple networks and ritual practices on Meizhou Island reinforce communal structures, regulate social relations, and facilitate governance at the village level. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, including participant observation and interviews, this study examines how temple management committees and local villagers collectively prepare for, manage, and participate in a Mazu procession. Additionally, it explains how support from the Putian government for the Mazu procession highlights the role of village governance within this ritual event. The Mazu procession, held biannually on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, is a large-scale ritual event that mobilises various actors, including temple leaders, community elders, and younger generations. Through cross-village coordination, the procession functions as a mechanism for village governance, where responsibilities, hierarchies, and local authority are negotiated. It serves as a platform for mediating disputes, reinforcing social obligations, and managing inter-village relationships, illustrating how intangible cultural heritage operates as a governance tool beyond its religious significance. Furthermore, this paper analyses how official heritage discourse intersects with grassroots folk practices, shaping the governance of Mazu belief as both a sacred tradition and a heritage asset. While UNESCO and China's official heritage framework classify the procession as intangible cultural heritage, its local governance

function remains rooted in vernacular traditions. By examining the intersection of state authority, folk belief autonomy, and heritage management, this paper sheds light on the broader implications of intangible cultural heritage in shaping rural village governance and community resilience in contemporary China.

The Pavilions among the Tents: Imperial Camps on the Nomadic Emperor's Inspection Tours in Ancient China

Xinbo Wang, Nankai University

After the Northern Wei, "transitional" camps appeared not only in the nomadic regimes of the Khitan and the Mongols, but also across the Eurasian continent from the 14th century onward. From the Timurid Period to the Ottoman Empire, the integration of "tents and pavilions" became a lasting cultural landscape, illustrating cross-temporal and cross-geographical "information sharing." This study, employing an interdisciplinary approach combining archaeology, history, and architectural anthropology, argues that the widespread appearance of such camps reflects the complex mindset of nomadic rulers facing settled cultures. The Northern Wei and later rulers used these camps to construct a "heterogeneous cultural landscape," distinct from both nomadic and settled environments, thus asserting their political identity. In the modern era, this phenomenon spread from elites to grassroots, with herders in regions like Inner Mongolia viewing "camp houses" as symbols of social status and territorial ownership. This paper seeks to examine the relationship between politics, society and living spaces, broadening the scope of ancient Chinese studies while offering insights into contemporary cultural exchanges.

Research on Nationalist Sentiments Towards China Based on Big Data of News Texts (1980-2022) **Wenting Xu, Shanghai International Studies University**

This study advances the empirical analysis of nationalist sentiment by employing a computational text analysis of 80,000 news articles spanning 1980–2022. Addressing the limitations of traditional survey-based methods, we propose a novel typology that delineates nationalist sentiment into four distinct dimensions: ingroup positivity, general outgroup negativity, threat-induced hostility, and contempt-driven aversion. Utilizing a bespoke "Nationalist Sentiment Typology" dictionary, our approach enables both a longitudinal and fine-grained examination of media discourse from India and Japan regarding China. Our analysis systematically traces the evolution of China-related nationalism over four decades, revealing three distinct phases: early ideological opposition during the late Cold War, economic apprehensions in the post-reform era, and emerging strategic rivalry in recent years. Further, by applying causal inference techniques, we illustrate a direct linkage between certain types of nationalist sentiment and subsequent behavioural outcomes. Notably, while shifts in sentiment appear to influence trade patterns for dependency-sensitive imports, no significant effect is detected on the flow of non-dependency-sensitive goods. By transcending the constraints of conventional survey methodologies, this study offers a replicable and robust framework for capturing the dynamic interplay between mediated public sentiment and geopolitical behaviour. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the ways in which media representations of nationalism interact with broader international relations, providing important insights for both scholars and policymakers.

I0908 Travel, Transformation and Regional Divide

Capital Transformation Among Chinese Returnees: A Comprehensive Review

Wanlu Chi, Loughborough University

This review explores the process of capital transformation among Chinese returnees, particularly focusing on those who have studied abroad and returned to China. With the increasing number of Chinese students returning from overseas, they face significant challenges in professional adaptation and social integration, particularly due to the non-recognition of foreign credentials and the undervaluation of their overseas experiences in the Chinese job market. The review also highlights

how spatial contexts (such as urban environments, labour market conditions, and professional networks) affect the transformation of these capitals, with metropolitan areas and professional hubs offering resources that facilitate career success. The review finds that the ultimate goal of capital transformation for returnees is to achieve a successful reintegration into China's labour market while overcoming identity challenges. These challenges involve reconciling the global identity formed during their studies with local expectations in China, ultimately redefining their professional and social identity. This review provides valuable insights for policymakers and educational institutions on how to support the reintegration of returnees. It suggests that addressing the undervaluation of international education and facilitating access to professional networks and opportunities in key urban areas could ease the reintegration process for returnees. Future research could further explore the spatial dimensions of capital transformation and investigate how different cities or regions in China offer distinct opportunities for returnees' social and professional success.

Migrant Capitals and Ethnicity: How Class affects the Ethnic Identity of Chinese Immigrants in the UK

Zhaowei Yin, University of Glasgow

This study explores the intersection of class and ethnicity, aiming to understand how class shapes British Chinese immigrants' understanding of ethnic identity by influencing the ways and strategies through which they utilize different forms of capital. It addresses two central questions: (1) How do Chinese migrants from different class backgrounds mobilize their cultural, social, and economic capital differently? (2) How do these differences impact their understanding of ethnic identity? The paper highlights that ethnicity is not a fixed social category but is shaped by migrants' class positions and life strategies. The research is based on life-history interviews with 28 Chinese migrants of varying class backgrounds living in Scotland. Drawing on Erel's theory of Migrant Capital and Bourdieu's Class theory, the study examines how migrants' pre-migration resources are recognized, devalued, or transformed within the UK's social structure. These theoretical frameworks help uncover how classed experiences shape the boundaries and meanings of ethnic identity in a diasporic context. Findings reveal that middle-class migrants often possess higher levels of education and language proficiency, enabling them to effectively convert their existing capital into professional opportunities within the UK. This facilitates closer connections with mainstream society. As a result, they tend to distance themselves from traditional Chinese migrant communities and construct a more fluid or hybrid form of ethnic identity. In contrast, working-class migrants face greater structural barriers, making it more difficult for their capital to be recognized or valued in the UK. Consequently, they rely more heavily on Chinese community networks and internal resources, reinforcing the maintenance of ethnic boundaries. Class position not only shapes their livelihood strategies but also reconfigures the ways in which ethnic identity is understood and performed.

Children's Experiences of Travel and Im/mobility in Shanghai's Summer Holidays

Rachel Murphy, University of Oxford

Leiping Bao, Shanghai Academy of Social Science

Drawing on in-depth interviews with matched sets of parents and children aged 9-14 years in 32 families in Shanghai, this paper explores how children's possibilities for travel and mobility during the summer holidays vary by their family's migration status and class and by the adults' parenting approach. Across families, a significant subset of parents sees travel and outings as beneficial for cultivating 'cultural capital' and certain competencies in their children and for family bonding. However, intersections of migration status and class also affect different children's substantive experiences of travel and mobility. Meanwhile, across different family backgrounds, a subset of children endures significant immobility, with the manifestations and reasons again varying by intersections of family migration status, class, and parenting approach. Our analysis reveals im/mobility during the school holidays to be an important but overlooked aspect of unequal childhoods.

Digital Feminist Activism in China: Navigating Individual-Collective Dynamic Across Urban and Rural Divides

Lily (Jinxian) Wu, Shenzhen University

In recent years, Chinese feminists have become increasingly active online and engaged in gender debates in a context where such discussions are largely invisible and unspeakable in the offline world. 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 whether all feminists online are necessarily urban middle-class women and suggest that we should investigate the diversity of online feminist activism (Dong, 2019). To investigate intersectional feminist agendas and forms of digital feminist activism in China, I draw on data from 34 in-depth interviews with Chinese digital feminists—a newly emerging and distinct cohort of digital natives born under the One-Child Policy—who represent diverse backgrounds in terms of rural-urban origin, socioeconomic class, sexuality, and international education. 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. Most of them have been influenced by popular culture in Asia and the West. 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. My findings are beginning to suggest that 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.

10909 Literary and Literature: Burden, Sensibility, Aesthetics

Transformations of the World and Literary Sensibility: A Comparative Study of Zhao Mengfu's and Sa Dula's Ci Poetry

Tien-chun Lee, National Chengchi University

This study explores the formal and technical aspects of Zhao Mengfu's thirty-six ci poems and Sa Dula's fifteen ci poems, shedding light on their contributions to Yuan dynasty ci poetry. Despite Zhao Mengfu's status as a calligraphy master and Sa Dula's prominence as a poet of non-Han ethnic background, their ci compositions have received limited scholarly attention. This research aims to fill that gap by conducting a comparative analysis from three perspectives: First, the study examines the poets' choice of ci tunes, classifying and summarizing their selections to uncover patterns and implicit literary intentions. Second, it analyzes their application of metrical and phonological techniques, utilizing ci notation and phonological knowledge to investigate their handling of rhyme, tonal alternations, and rhythmic structures. This discussion further highlights the musicality and prosodic features of their works. Third, through a close reading of *Shui Long Yin* (Water Dragon Chant) and *Mu Lan Hua Man* (Magnolia Slow), the study offers a detailed comparative analysis of their stylistic and thematic differences. A review of major literary history textbooks, such as Liu Dajie's *History of Chinese Literary Development*, Ye Qingbing's *History of Chinese Literature*, and Yuan Xingpei's *History of Chinese Literature*, reveals that neither Zhao Mengfu nor Sa Dula's ci poetry has been substantially discussed. Even specialized studies, including Ding Fang's *Studies on Jin and Yuan Ci* and Tao Ran's *Comprehensive Study of Jin and Yuan Ci*, largely overlook their works. This study, therefore, addresses a neglected area in ci scholarship.

By examining Zhao Mengfu's and Sa Dula's ci through a formal and technical lens, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of their literary significance. It also situates their works within

the broader context of Yuan dynasty ci poetry, offering new insights into how historical transformations shaped literary expression.

The Literary Aesthetics of the *Zhuangzi*: Lin Xiyi's Commentary and its Significance

Peter Smith, University of Oxford

The reception of the *Zhuangzi* (莊子) has often centred on its philosophical analysis or its relevance to Daoist thought, but the engaging literary quality of the *Zhuangzi*'s writing has also played a significant role in its enduring appeal. This paper will argue for the fundamental importance of literary features in reading and understanding the *Zhuangzi*. This presentation highlights the pivotal contributions of the Song dynasty scholar Lin Xiyi (林希逸) (1193–1271), whose commentary to the *Zhuangzi* is the first to consistently emphasise literary features of the text—such as unusual vocabulary, repetition, rhythm, and textual structure—and consider their significance to the reader. This study examines Lin's views on the coherence of the text, his approach to examining its literary features, and the reasons he considered these literary elements as essential.

Lin's commentary uses a highly distinctive language to convey his appreciation of the *Zhuangzi*'s writing style. Rather than focus purely on analysis of specific techniques, he uses terms such as *qi* (奇 peculiar), *guwu* (鼓舞 drumming and dancing), and *shi* (勢 momentum / power) to express the subtle qualities of the writing and consider their impact on the reader. I argue that the impact of the literary features may be broadly categorised into two groups. The first covers affective elements which may impact the tone and mood, inspire sustained attention, or elicit surprise—aspects of the writing that affect the reader's experience and engagement with the text. The second elicit reflective attention from the reader, causing them to contemplate uncertainties, reflect on unexpected features, or leave them pondering the deeper meaning of the text for themselves. Overall, his commentary shows that he considered an appreciation of these literary features to be essential for effective engagement with the *Zhuangzi*.

Loss and preservation: Childhood Trauma in Eileen Chang's Autobiographical Writing (*The Fall of the Pagoda* and *The Book of Change*)

Braci (Yunqiao) Liu, University of Heidelberg

American-Chinese author Eileen Chang's (1920-1995) autobiographical works *The Fall of the Pagoda* and *The Book of Change* (1957–1964), written after her 1955 migration to America, reframe her Republican-era childhood and adolescence (1920–1937) through the dual lens of traumatic memory and historical dislocation. This presentation argues that Chang's layered narratives construct identity as a *palimpsest of repressed memories and inherited burdens*, where familial strife and late Qing cultural decay converge as metaphors for national crisis. By juxtaposing the innocent perspective of her younger self with the analytical detachment of her mature voice in her 30s-40s, Chang performs a quiet rebellion: writing the unspeakable (maternal estrangement, patriarchal collapse, and intergenerational silence), to resist the erasure of marginalized experiences. Analysing her interplay of fragmented recollection and lyrical detail through trauma theory, this study illuminates how Chang's post-WWII (1957-1964) writing negotiates historical rupture by weaving childhood trauma into a hybrid present. Her texts expose the surreal contradictions of a family clinging to decaying traditions amidst Republican-era modernity, a tension that burdens younger generations with unresolved legacies. While individuals appear trapped between tradition and modernity, Chang's narratives reveal their gravitation toward subversive agency, not through overt resistance but via the act of memorializing silenced histories. This presentation further argues that Chang's autobiographies challenge dominant historical narratives of the Republican era. By rendering intimate family secrets as microcosms of national dislocation, she destabilizes grand discourses of progress and crisis, centring instead the embodied costs of epochal transition for women and children. Her works thus redefine historical memory as an affective archive, where personal and collective traumas intersect.

J1003 Beyond Bitterness: Strategies for Reclaiming the Present in Contemporary China (Part II: Embodied and Critical Dispositions) [P]

Group C

As a narrative trope mobilized by both the party-state and ordinary Chinese citizens throughout the PRC, “eating bitterness (*chiku*)” signifies the necessity to sacrifice or even suffer in the present for imagined future rewards. Institutionalized as a revolutionary virtue during the Mao regime, *chiku* in the post-marketization era was reframed as within a neoliberal logic that justified self-sacrifice in the name of personal success, upward mobility, and wealth accumulation. However, our anthropological research with contemporary Chinese migrant labourers, backpackers, and rural ‘return youths’ made us question the ongoing place of *chiku* as a unifying work ethic or moral framework in contemporary China. Instead of striving subjects who “reduce the present to an empty vehicle to the future” (Xiang 2021) by committing to the “temporal mode of ceaseless striving” (Hansen 2015), those who question eating bitterness seek to dwell in the present through new practices of (un)production, (im)mobility, self-cultivation, and re-examinations of family and social relationships. Such a diverse range of undertakings to engage with the here-and-now came to form what we call “strategies of reclaiming the present.” In the first panel we will explore the embodied and critical dispositions adopted by Chinese urbanites, including IT workers adopting ‘dog culture’ (Liang), young mothers ‘sitting the month’ (Ge), queer fun (Shen), ‘lying flat’ (Yin), and alternative lifestyles zero-waste living (Lora-Wainwright, Johnson, & Wong). The second panel explores the role of mobility in strategies to reclaim the present, including middle class migrants’ quest for the good life in Portugal (Cojokaru & Wang), intergenerational value change among migrants from Zhejiang in Europe (Irigoyen-Lopez), the new lifestyles of Chinese backpackers (Stapleton), and artists (Caruso). That panel will conclude by turning to the dilemmas faced by rural migrant, with one paper on rural migrants who “rest” in a rustbelt city (Tang), and another on temporary workers at an SOE (Lian).

From Wolves to Dogs: Rethinking Endurance, Sacrifice and Hard Work as Working Culture

Boyang Liang, University of Leeds

In ancient Chinese culture, Confucianism had a profound influence on the concept of “ren (endurance)”. It was not only a suppression of individual emotions and desires but also a moral duty, emphasising self-sacrifice for the greater good: understanding the interests of society, family, and the collective as noble and lofty goals. Under the influence of CCP ideology, achieving the comprehensive development of society through collective effort and self-sacrifice has been glorified as the core spirit. This has led to the close association of endurance, sacrifice, and hard work with a “promising future” in the values of labours. For example, some IT companies see firmly implement “wolf culture” and the 9961 and “big-small week2” work schedules. Despite social and legal criticism, these corporate cultures become tools for pressuring employees to work tirelessly, while employees are forced to endure and hardworking, which led to unhealthy competition as *neijuan* (involution). With the ongoing changes in society, the tightening job market, the devaluation of education, and the suboptimal health caused by self-sacrifice and enduring hardship for work, the younger generation of professionals has begun to question the work culture they have long adhered to and realized that hard work does not necessarily lead to rewards. As a result, they have shifted from proudly seeing themselves as the company’s wolves to self-deprecating as the dogs of their bosses, starting to seek resistance through practices such as *tangping* and *bailan* in the “dog culture”. This cultural shift is not merely an individual choice but also a reflection on attempting to break free from long-embedded workplace identity and tradition. The article is part of my PhD project related to *neijuan*, *tangping*, and *bailan* as working philosophies. It particularly focuses on young IT professionals as Chinese white-collar workers seek self-consistency in the evolving contemporary work culture.

Tangping as Doing: Zero-Waste Living in Urban China

Anna Lora-Wainwright, University of Oxford

Tom Johnson, University of Sheffield

Yuet Yan Katherine Wong, University of Oxford

This study explores the intersection between *tangping* and zero-waste living in urban China, challenging the prevailing notion of *tangping* as mere passivity and non-engagement. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in urban Hangzhou, we examine the extent to which *tangping* overlaps with the form of ‘opting out’ enabled by zero-waste living through which advocates articulate alternative ethical frameworks and visions of living well that diverge from dominant societal norms. While *tangping* has often been framed as a silent rebellion against hypercompetitive work culture and socio-economic pressures, we demonstrate that zero-waste advocates engage in a form of activism that not only rejects excessive consumerism but also envisions sustainable futures that diverge from top-down environmentalism. We foreground everyday practices of sustainable consumption, waste reduction, and alternative materialism to show that zero-waste advocates, rather than adhering to a fixed blueprint for the future, continuously improvise in response to ethical and moral concerns in the present. By highlighting actors’ evolving agency, moral aspirations, and notions of care, we move beyond the reductive interpretation of these actions as mere responses to state-driven deflections of responsibility onto individuals. While *tangping* is often framed as an apolitical withdrawal from state influence, we complicate this portrayal by examining how environmental engagement in an illiberal context often necessitates the formation of networks that transcend state-society boundaries. By drawing attention to how zero-waste living fosters alternative consumption that extends its influence beyond the private realm in the public sphere, we reveal its ethical and political potential as a quiet yet deliberate act of “escaping without leaving”. In doing so, we illustrate how other opt-out practices, such as *tangping*, can function as a form of activism that is both personal and political. Overall, this study seeks to illuminate the ways in which *tangping* can serve as a meaningful mode of engagement rather than mere retreat in a political landscape where ideals of the good life are largely dictated by the state.

Politics of Refusal: Migration as relinquishment in China’s rustbelt

Siyu Tang, University of Oxford

This paper investigates the politics of refusal voiced and enacted by young rural migrant workers in China, as they migrated from China’s top-tier cities to Hegang, China’s “city with the cheapest housing price” in the northeast rustbelt. A city in Heilongjiang Province near the Russia border, Hegang has been experiencing steady economic, and population decline since the 1990s, it has witnessed an unexpected “revival” since 2018, when an influx of young migrants from rural origins came to purchase its cheap apartments. Unlike the emblematic image of “striving,” “self-enterprising,” and “desiring” rural migrant subjects who anxiously sought economic gains in China’s marketized economy portrayed by a vast body of social science literature, those in Hegang rather described their works and lives in the big cities as “painful” and “purposeless.” For them, buying an apartment in Hegang meant ending the life of constant struggles, and to just “lie flat,” or “rest” in a stable place where they can “call home.” In scholarly discussions regarding China’s rural migrants, a dichotomy is often presented between their future of “being integrated as urban citizens” and “being radicalized to demand for better workers’ rights.” However, my research suggests that— as liminal subjects between the urban and the rural, between disposable and necessary – the “way out” for Chinese migrant workers does not lie within challenging how work is rewarded or citizenship is granted, but rather refusing the intrinsically unjust institution of work and convention of citizenship altogether. Beyond the binary between “inclusion” and “exclusion,” I highlight the Hegang migrants’ agency as they detach from hegemonic promises of upward mobility, nuclear family-building, and “positive energy” campaigns mediated by wage work and urban citizenship. If the act of refusal is “an assertion of victory and invincibility” (Mauss 1967 [1925]: 39) my paper thus explores how new life-worlds were materialized at China’s rustbelt through the relinquishment from conventional productive and reproductive processes in contemporary

China.

J1004 Cooperation and Competition: China, US and Russia

Navigating Industrial Policy as a Tool Against Securitisation: Making Sense of China's Security Framework Supporting Manufacturing Sector Since 2018

Haoyan Yuan, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen

Since the end of the Cold War, International Relations scholarship has predominantly focused on explaining the absence of effective external balancing against U.S. hegemony, while traditional IR literature emphasizes states' tendencies to employ either internal or external balancing strategies against dominant powers. This paper examines China's strategic response to intensified U.S. securitization policies since 2018, particularly focusing on Beijing's internal balancing approach through industrial policy in the manufacturing sector. While existing research has extensively analysed China's external balancing efforts, such as its strategic partnerships and economic initiatives, scholarly attention to its internal balancing mechanisms remains limited. Through a comprehensive analysis of China's domestic industrial policies, this study demonstrates how Beijing has systematically developed its manufacturing capabilities as a strategic response to external pressures. The research reveals that China's industrial policy framework serves a dual purpose: enhancing domestic technological self-sufficiency while simultaneously strengthening its position in global supply chains. Drawing from primary sources and policy documents, this paper argues that China's manufacturing-focused industrial policy represents a sophisticated internal balancing strategy that bridges domestic economic development with broader foreign policy objectives. This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of how rising powers can employ industrial policy as a tool of internal balancing in response to securitization pressures from established hegemons. The findings suggest that in the contemporary international system, internal balancing strategies have evolved beyond traditional military capabilities to encompass industrial and technological self-strengthening measures.

Middle Powers' Omnidirectional Hedging in Sino-US Strategic Competition: Taiwan as a Case Study **Zichen Shao, Queen's University Belfast**

In response to the uncertainty of Sino-US relations, middle powers have generally adopted a strategy of dual hedging. However, as Sino-US relations shift toward strategic competition, middle powers, while continuing to employ this strategy, have also begun to seek bilateral or minilateral cooperation with other middle powers on specific issues. Their response to the Taiwan issue illustrates this shift: middle powers not only align with the United States in expressing concerns over Taiwan but also actively pursue joint engagement with other middle powers. This study investigates the following research question: Why, in the context of great power competition, have middle powers begun to collaborate with one another on issues related to great power rivalry? In other words, why do middle powers simultaneously engage in dual hedging between great powers while also strengthening cooperation with other middle powers? By comparing the threat perceptions of Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and India regarding the Taiwan issue, this study develops a theoretical framework to explain the motivations for middle power cooperation amid great power competition. Building on the perspective of omnidirectional hedging, this study argues that middle powers cooperation is a kind of sophisticated hedging behaviour for middle powers do not merely hedge against threats arising from specific issues, such as the Taiwan contingency, but also navigate the uncertainties posed by great powers themselves. Through this analysis, the study is expected to contribute to the understanding of middle power cooperation, their role in great power rivalry, and the broader implications for regional security dynamics in the Indo-Pacific, especially for Taiwan Strait.

When Artemis Meets Chang'e: U.S.-China Great-power Competition over the Moon and the Cislunar Space

Jan Železný, CEVRO University

Space has become a new domain of great power competition, with the U.S. maintaining its dominant position. However, its preponderance is being challenged by China, as outer space is considered strategically important for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and an indispensable part of Beijing's vision of mankind as a global community of shared destiny. The cislunar space with the Moon at its core then constitutes an object of great importance. Not only does it contain vast reservoirs of water, helium, and other indispensable resources needed for the development of the Earth's economy, but it also has a strategic position for any further outer space exploration and human expansion to other planets. Under President Trump, the U.S. announced its intention to return to the Moon's surface as part of the ambitious Artemis mission, which should include the build-up of the habitable base. To bolster its dominance, Washington launched the Artemis Accords, acquiring the support of 53 states for its vision of future conduct on the Moon and the cislunar space. However, through the successful Chang'e probe missions, China reached many unprecedented scientific achievements and, in 2022, announced the International Lunar Research Station (ILRS). Supported by Russia and its Luna program, it plans to establish a competing Moon-based station after 2030. It also used the ILRS to spread its influence among the Global South countries, with 13 of them assigned to participate. My paper will, therefore, map the development of both competing Moon projects, their origins, underlying visions, and the international cooperation behind them. It will also describe its impact on the great power competition in space and the risks of turning the Moon into a war-fighting domain. It will contribute to the understanding of the nascent astro politics (the geopolitics in space) and China's role in it.

China-Russia relations in the 1990s: Endless Rapprochement

Hanjing Wang, University of Nottingham

The proposed paper is part of a larger research project dealing with developments in China-Russian relations during the 1990s. This is an important area of enquiry, because the development of relations between China and Russia during the first decade of the post-Soviet era remains distinctly understudied. Although at the end of the 1980s, the Chinese and USSR government had reached the consensus on the main concerns, the sudden collapse of the USSR still influenced the process of China-Russia rapprochement in further steps – how it was going in later? Notably, this decade built the foundations of what is today described as the 'highest level in history' of relations between both states. As such, arguably, a solid understanding of how relations developed during the 1990s is important for an informed assessment of the state and trajectory of contemporary China-Russia relations. Analytically, the paper focuses on the concept of 'rapprochement' in China-Russian relations. This concept regularly has been referred to in the analytical literature since the Cold War, but it is rarely defined or analysed systematically. How useful is the concept of 'rapprochement' for understanding developments in China-Russia relations? How should 'rapprochement' be defined and how can it be measured? Have China and Russia reached 'rapprochement' during the 1990s or subsequently, or is this still an ongoing process? This research would like to bring the latest new discoveries from archives and memoirs, which were mostly hidden under the Chinese and Russian government documents, the mass media news from the mainstream and the local, and the interviews and memoirs of Chinese and Russian leaders and diplomats who were playing the decision-maker or participant roles in the 1990s. It will utilise the process-tracing methods and document analysis.

J1005 China: United Front, Empire and Cultural Diplomacy

Was China an Empire? Contemporary Responses and Implications

Fei Zheng, Shanghai University of Political Science and Law

This presentation explores the question of whether China was an empire and further analyses the political and historical significance of the contemporary Chinese government's denial of an "imperial" identity. It first reviews the historical usage of the concept of "empire" in China and the

debates among Chinese scholars regarding China's imperial status. It then examines the evolution of China's state-building model and discusses the late Qing Chinese debates on the form of the state, finally, discusses the "imperialization" of CCP's ethnic policy and contemporary trend of "de-imperialization" in China's official discourse and its implications. The conclusion is that the Chinese government's "de-imperialization" is not merely an academic debate but also an adjustment of national identity. Compared to the multiethnic imperial model of the Qing Dynasty, contemporary China places greater emphasis on a centralized system akin to that of the Ming Dynasty. This shift may impact the country's governance model, ethnic policies, and foreign relations, potentially presenting new challenges for China's future unification and development.

Decoding China Through QR Codes: What Digital Payments Reveal About Chinese Society, Culture, And Values

Srinivas Yanamandra, Indian School of Business

The widespread adoption of QR code-based payments in China has become a defining feature of its digital economy, yet it also offers a unique lens through which to examine deeper cultural patterns, institutional logics, and societal values. While QR codes originated as a technical solution for information encoding, their integration into everyday financial transactions—ranging from luxury retail to street vending, religious donations, and even personal charity—has transformed them into socio-technical artifacts that reflect the dynamics of contemporary Chinese society. This paper examines how QR code payments in China have evolved beyond their functional utility to shape and be shaped by the cultural context in which they operate. Methodologically, the analysis draws on two complementary strands: (1) platform interface analysis of super-apps like WeChat Pay and Alipay, focusing on the design logics that integrate payments with identity, communication, and governance functions; and (2) ethnographic interpretation based on observed practices, user behaviours, and secondary sources from digital anthropology and media reports, capturing how QR payments are embedded in the rhythms of daily life. In contrast to Western payment infrastructures—characterized by card-based systems, institutional intermediaries, and a regulatory focus on privacy—China's QR payment model is mobile-native, platform-driven, and shaped by values of convenience, social integration, and pragmatic trust. Rather than portraying this divergence as a technological anomaly or political artifact, the paper argues for understanding QR code adoption as a reflection of China's distinct pathway to digital modernity. By decoding the social life of QR codes, the study offers a framework for interpreting how financial technologies embody cultural meaning and societal values. It also suggests implications for global policymakers and fintech regulators seeking to design inclusive, scalable, and culturally resonant digital financial systems.

Projecting China's Idea of China: An Analysis of International Co-production Documentaries as a Vehicle for Cultural Diplomacy, 1980 – Present

Chen Yang, Cardiff University

This study investigates the strategic deployment of Chinese international co-produced documentaries as tools of cultural diplomacy and soft power, set against the backdrop of China's comprehensive state-driven ideological and propaganda efforts (Chan, 2007; Brady, 2009; Brady, 2017). China's cultural diplomacy is distinctive in that the mobilization of 'culture' closely aligns with Communist Party propaganda objectives, with all participating actors required to adhere to the official narrative (Edney, 2014; Brady, 2017). Despite significant scholarly attention to China's soft power strategies and the role of documentary filmmaking (Edney, 2014; Peng & Keane, 2019; Rawnsley et al., 2021), existing analyses rarely offer a systematic exploration of state influence on production processes or how these processes shape filmmakers' identities and perceptions. Based on Pierre Bourdieu's (1996) field theory, this research systematically examines the power structures, relational dynamics, and rules governing China's international documentary co-production subfield, highlighting interactions among various actors, including filmmakers, cultural institution representatives, and government policymakers. Through a comprehensive historical overview

covering developments from the 1980s to the present, supplemented by selected case studies, the study demonstrates how co-produced documentaries serve as critical mediums for cross-cultural communication and national image construction. The unique contribution of this study lies in its innovative extension of Bourdieu's field theory (1996) to encompass the complexities of transnational cultural production. Unlike previous applications limited to specific national contexts, this research explicitly addresses transnational interactions, emphasizing ideological diversity among international participants and the subsequent impacts on their motivations and identity formation (Couldry, 2003; Vestheim, 2012). By conceptualizing international documentary co-production as a dynamic intersection of multiple fields, the study enhances understanding of how various forms of capital—economic, cultural, social, and symbolic—are negotiated and exchanged across national boundaries. This study expanded theoretical approach thus provides fresh perspectives on the multifaceted processes and impacts of China's strategic use of documentary filmmaking in global diplomatic contexts.

Research on the Failure of the United Front, before and after 1949

Boyang Zhang, National University of Singapore

The United Front was regarded as the effective political means for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to unite potential political forces and eliminate rivals. During the Sino-Japanese War and the Civil War, the (CCP) actively employed the United Front strategy to combat imperialism and strive for national independence. This approach successfully gained the support of many Chinese intellectuals for the CCP's ruling authority. However, after 1949, until the outbreak of the Anti-Rightist Movement, the CCP's United Front strategy lost its original effectiveness, which eventually led to the outbreak of contradictions between the new regime and Chinese intellectuals. To understand why the implementation of the United Front concept yielded different outcomes in various periods, the common interests of the CCP and intellectuals have become the primary key to the study. This article argues that the success and failure of the United Front strategy in different periods is mainly contingent upon mutual recognition of these shared interests between Chinese intellectuals and the party. Before 1949, Chinese intellectuals and the CCP were more able to achieve mutual complementarity with national independence as the centre, making constructing common interests relatively straightforward. However, after the PRC's establishment, there were significant differences between the intellectuals and the CCP regarding their self-positioning in the political system and their complementary interests in each other's intentions, ultimately undermining the foundation for establishing shared interests and the success of the United Front.

J1007 Propaganda, Resistance, Elites and Food [O]

Gender Discourse and Everyday Politics in Socialist China: A Content Analysis of Political Propaganda Posters in the Early PRC (1949-1978)

Shiyu Wei, City University of Hong Kong

Evaluations of the "women's liberation" movement in socialist China have produced widely divergent scholarly perspectives on political emancipation, the division of labour, and gender narratives. This paper focuses on the gender discourses and power structures that women in socialist China faced at the level of everyday politics; in this regard, this paper employs visual critical discourse analysis (CDA) to study more than three hundred political propaganda posters from the early Republic (1949-1978) in an attempt to discover how gender discourses in the realm of everyday life were invoked, and how they constituted the everyday gender politics encountered by women. gender politics is discovered. The analysis reveals that the portrayal of 'revolutionary' women is likely to be a 'de-feminized' rather than a 'de-gendered' imagining of the division of labour and that women who have not encountered the 'de-feminization' of the 'revolution' are more likely to be the ones who have not been subjected to the 'de-gendered' imagery. The "defeminized" image of women appears only in specific contexts and is objectified as the object of various political movements. Turning to the relational analysis of group portraits, women often existed as part of the

image of "the people," and when they intersected with the identities of ethnic minorities and intellectuals, women's identity as the "united object" of the unified state power was highlighted. The everyday politics faced by women in the early Republic were critical, that is, while women were "liberated" in areas such as labour, they were also given a set of everyday political roles embedded in the national discourse, which undoubtedly constituted a tension that was different from that of the past.

Writing on its 4th Anniversary: Memory, Recovery, and Resistance in the Aftermath of the 7.20 Zhengzhou Flood

Yichi Liu, Seoul National University

Disasters usually leave severe impacts on people in modern cities, yet recovery and adaptation also take place. The summer of 2021 will likely remain one of the most unforgettable periods for the people of Zhengzhou. The "7.20 Flood" claimed 380 lives and severely damaged the city's modern infrastructure. Central government unprecedentedly launched an official disaster investigation, and six months later, it formally acknowledged the dual nature as both meteorological and human-made. Residents faced the challenging process of reconstructing their homeland, coping with trauma, and reshaping their daily lives in response to an altered environment. In this study, I explore how people responded to the disaster and the personal, collective narratives they constructed. As both an anthropological researcher and a victim, I particularly focus on the nuances between personal memories and official accounts. This research also investigates how ordinary people perceive a natural disaster that fundamentally altered their lives. I recruit anthropological methodology, including ethnographic observation of the most devastated areas and in-depth interviews with survivors. The result reveals that 7.20 has become a new benchmark for uncertainty and risk. It cultivates a series of unique living habits upon most seriously damaged life aspects. Moreover, the disaster reinforced individual responsibility and agency, fostering an optimistic individualism among residents. Yet, the shadow of the flood lingers. New habits and mutual support persist as acts of resistance against forgetting. Through this paper, I aim to update academic practices in the anthropology of disaster within the Chinese context. Furthermore, it calls for a broader anthropological focus on the critical relationship between disasters and the lived experiences of modern urban populations.

On the 'Culinary Nanyang' in Li Zishu's Novel *Flowing Mundane Land*

Junjie Qin, Beijing Normal University

Food carries profound social and cultural metaphorical significance. Through the perception and practice of "eating", individuals construct distinct ethnic identities, distinguishing themselves from others while simultaneously engaging in intercultural dialogue. In Malaysian Chinese female writer Li Zishu's novel *Flowing Mundane Land*, culinary discourse establishes a unique metaphorical system known as "Culinary Nanyang", which functions as a *Fūzokuga*—a vivid depiction of the secular lives of the Malaysian Chinese community. This textual representation is characterized by hybridity, locality, and dialectical complexity. Within Li's narrative, the ostensibly weighty issue of identity is deconstructed into a series of subtle sensory experiences embedded in daily food consumption. The concept of "Cultural China" is deeply woven into this "Culinary Nanyang", seemingly intangible and elusive, yet ever-present in the familiar flavours that permeate the everyday lives of Malaysian Chinese. This paper explores the significance of "Culinary Nanyang" through three key dimensions. First, it examines how food serves as a repository of cultural memory, shaping the localized experiences of the Malaysian Chinese community while reflecting their ties to and identification with ancestral culture. Second, it investigates how culinary narratives in the novel reveal the displacement and complexities of identity among Malaysian Chinese. Lastly, the study delves into Li Zishu's nuanced portrayal of female characters' eating behaviours, shedding light on their struggles within a patriarchal society and their expressions of desire. By analysing the metaphorical system of

"Culinary Nanyang", this paper aims to offer deeper insights into the identity negotiations, cultural hybridity, and gendered dimensions of the Chinese diaspora within a multicultural society.

Zhou or Milk? Tradition, Science, and the Shifting Ethics of Chinese Breakfast

Ziyang Lin, University of Exeter

This paper interrogates a contentious debate on Chinese social media regarding the consumption of *zhou* (rice porridge) versus milk, which was ignited by medical expert Zhang Wenhong's controversial COVID-19 dietary advice. While ostensibly offering nutritional guidance for children during a public health crisis, Zhang's remarks have since precipitated a broader discussion that exposes underlying ideological fissures between traditional agrarian knowledge and modern nutritional science, and between longstanding cultural identity and emergent modernity. The paper begins by situating the debate within its socio-cultural context, recounting how *zhou* has been a fundamental element of Chinese dietary tradition for centuries—imbued with medicinal value and economic pragmatism—while milk, a relatively recent addition to the Chinese breakfast table, gained prominence through state-sponsored policy initiatives and the adoption of Western nutritional paradigms. By critically analysing the discourse that unfolded on social media platforms, the study explores how the conflict transcends mere food preferences, instead reflecting deeper tensions over national identity and the process of modernisation. On one side, advocates of *zhou* assert its enduring cultural significance and historical continuity as a symbol of Chinese foodways, drawing on its roots in traditional Chinese medicine and its role as an accessible, cost-effective staple. On the other, proponents of milk emphasise its scientific endorsement and nutritional superiority—attributes that have been instrumentalised by governmental and corporate narratives to promote a vision of national rejuvenation. Through this examination, the paper reveals that the debate is emblematic of a broader cultural transition, wherein the interplay between tradition and modernity is mediated by evolving public health discourses and government policies. Ultimately, the analysis demonstrates that food choices are not solely about dietary preferences but also serve as a battleground for competing ideologies regarding health, heritage, and the future trajectory of Chinese society.

J1008 Resistance in the Digital World and Art

Challenging the Fantasy of Marital Happiness: Self-Marriage and Dating Theatre in Contemporary Chinese Women's Performance Art

Minji Du, University of Birmingham

I examine two performance art pieces - Xiao Lu's *Wedlock* (2009), and Hu Yifei's *Sugar* (2012) - to explore female resistance against dominant heteronormative expectations for women to marry. Both artists critique Neo-liberal and Confucian cultural logics in contemporary China by interrogating important rituals in the cycle of relationships and life - dating, marriage, and death. In Confucian logic, marriage is still seen as a measure of a woman's worth in modern China, and many women internalize the belief that they "must" get married, even if they find the prospect of marriage not fulfilling. Neo-liberalism promotes individualism and self-reliance, sidestepping the collective and familial expectations placed upon women in Chinese society. Although these "leftover women" are expressing their own individualism by not marrying, yet they continue to face societal scrutiny not because they personally feel unfulfilled. Xiao's *Wedlock* opens with a disquieting funeral scene, which is then followed by an unexpected turn - an act of self-marriage. Through this symbolic transformation from death to rebirth, Xiao reclaims agency, challenging the gendered logic that ties a woman's sense of fulfilment and achievement to marriage. *Wedlock* presents an alternative choice for women, demonstrating how creativity and wit can challenge the constraints of societal heteronormativity. In contrast, Hu's *Sugar* reconstructs a seemingly ordinary and sweet dating scene. *Sugar* unintentionally exposes ingrained gendered social promises - of happiness, stability, and social acceptance. It reflects the underlying power structures of heterosexuality like societal endorsement of male "initiators" and female "receivers" in relational interactions. Xiao and Hu explore the paradox of leftover women, rewriting the epistemology of marriage and romance. By

dismantling the oppressive myth of the “happy marriage”, Xiao and Hu challenge the deeply entrenched heteronormative order and introduce a new critical paradigm shift in gender studies within the Chinese context.

Cute: A Jingju Aesthetic Category

William Want, Shanghai Theatre Academy

Discussions of *Jingju* Beijing Opera (京剧) have long privileged beauty — its refinements, discipline, and transcendence — as the core aesthetic of performance and appreciation. This paper challenges that dominance by arguing that *Jingju* cultivates an alternative aesthetic: cuteness. Far from being a mere byproduct of modernisation or popular taste, cuteness functions as a disruptive aesthetic, subverting established hierarchies of form, emotion, and spectatorship. Unlike beauty, which lulls the audience into a state of reverence and transcendence, cuteness thrives on instability: exaggerated articulations, awkward gestures, the ‘zany’ overworking of frantic maids, which all radically foreground the *labour* of performance. Through dramatic and musical analyses of three *Jingju* plays in the Xun Huisheng School (荀派 *Xunpai*) tradition, I argue that cuteness is not a failure of beauty but a competing aesthetic logic — one that teeters between delight and discomfort, tradition and reinvention. *Xunpai*, known for its playful young female (花旦 *huadan*) roles, foregrounds performance as an affective negotiation rather than a fixed ideal. Cuteness thus operates as a deliberate intervention that complicates *Jingju*’s ideological associations with perfection and tradition. Ultimately, I propose that *Jingju*’s aesthetic of cuteness exposes the form’s inherent rhizomic textuality — a continual rewriting that unsettles binaries between beautiful and ugly, source and adaptation, and performer and audience. Rather than breaking from tradition, cuteness aligns *Jingju* with the Chinese textual criticism tradition: from scholars scrawling love poems in the margins of classical texts to contemporary fan-fiction reclaiming marginalised women throughout history and literature. Cuteness is not a trivial embellishment but an embodied mode of interpretation — an insistence on multiplicity within a tradition too often reduced to singular ideals. By re-centring *Jingju* around the cute, I argue for a reconsideration of performance as active and affective, where instability is not a flaw but a generative and narrative force.

Marxism Haunting Marxism: *Tangpingism* as a Comparative Praxis of Digital Resistance in China **Cheng Ma, Freie Universität Berlin**

This paper examines *Tangpingism* (“躺平主义”, or “lying flat”) as a form of digital resistance rooted in Marxist ideologies and political traditions in contemporary China. Emerging initially from online memes, *Tangpingism* has evolved into a socio-political critique that challenges the economic and political system of China. It resonates strongly with disillusioned youth who face labour exploitation and economic precarity, presenting a distinctive landscape of hauntology: Marxism haunting Marxism, both conscious and unconscious, online and offline, and present and absent.

The paper addresses three dimensions:

1. **Evolution of *Tangpingism* and Economic Context:** This section traces the development of *Tangpingism* from online memes to a socio-political critique. It situates the movement within China’s growing economic inequalities and frames it as a Marxist critique of capitalist structures and neoliberal policies.
2. **Digital Spaces as Sites of Resistance:** By analysing the role of digital platforms in fostering anonymity and enabling collective dissent, this study highlights how digital resistance reimagines Marxist praxis in an authoritarian context.
3. **Marxism as Political Culture:** Examining Marxism as China’s official ideology, this paper explores how *Tangpingism*’s challenge to state narratives aligns with the tradition of “holding up the red flag to oppose the red flag (扛着红旗反红旗)”, reinterpreting Marxism to address socio-political realities.

By situating *Tangpingism* within global ethnographic manifestations of Marxism, this paper contributes to the comparative study of Marxism as both theory and practice. It provides a nuanced

understanding of how digital resistance and political culture intersect, offering valuable insights into contemporary Chinese society and enriching the field of Chinese Studies.

J1010 Victimhood, Burden and National Memory

Beyond Victimhood: Representations of Resistance and Agency in the Cultural Memory of Comfort Women in Chinese-Language Films

Hanqi Yang, Loughborough University

This article explores the representation of comfort women in Chinese cinema, focusing on how these women's identities are constructed and mediated through film. Drawing on cultural memory studies, gender studies, and film studies, the analysis employs an intersectional approach to examine how identity is shaped in the cinematic portrayal of comfort women's experiences. The research analyses five films—*Comfort Women 74th Branch* (1994), *Zhenzhen* (2003), *The Flowers of War* (2011), *Thirty-two* (2014), and *Twenty-two* (2017)—to reveal the socio-political context shaping the portrayal of comfort women. Through examining visual imagery, narrative style, production techniques, and the discourse surrounding these films, the study highlights how cinema both reflects and reconstructs historical narratives, contributing to the broader cultural memory of the comfort women issue. The findings show a complex shift in the representation of comfort women over time. Recent films portray more diverse roles, moving beyond the victim narrative to include depictions of heroism, resistance, and patriotism. However, traditional portrayals, such as those focusing on women's violated bodies, persist, reinforcing longstanding stereotypes. This study argues that these varying representations offer insights into how cultural memory and identity are mediated in film, and how these portrayals shape broader societal understandings of history and belonging. The paper also considers how the cinematic representation of comfort women impacts identity development, particularly for women, and how it challenges or supports official narratives of history, thus influencing collective memory and identity in contemporary Chinese society.

Literature Committed: The Burden of Literary Obligation

Xin Qu, University of Oxford

Internet literature is a digital-born literary form in China which has been widely accessible to the public since the 2000s. It is a 'live' literary form with 'unpredictable' contents as it is usually updated online on literary platforms by creative writers in serialized instalments daily and then used aesthetically and instantly by readers. On literary platforms, writers typically publish and distribute their first 15-20 chapters for free as a literary 'gift' (Mauss, 2002) wherefrom writers then segue into the economic logic in the literary industry, expecting readers to subscribe for subsequent plots. 'I used to be a very absolute and pure HE (Happy Ending) devotee, though I have to say that I've already slightly relaxed my readerly requirements in recent years'. When I discussed with my informants what kinds of internet literature they are looking for when reading digitally, I expected something more general (e.g., unique styles, rich characters, sophisticated plots) on fictional worldbuilding but received something personal on its ending. Later, I got to know that what I assumed to be a deceptively personal expectation turned out almost to be an unwritten rule acknowledged widely, albeit not necessarily approvingly, in the coterie of internet literature participants. Why do internet literature readers believe creative writers owe them a literary debt when they find out that the entire novel lands on a BE (Bad Ending)? Inspired by the unexpected turn in my two-year fieldwork on internet literature in China, I develop a theory of the 'literary shuttle' of creative writers between freedom and obligation. I seek to understand how literary imagination promotes a sense of certainty and assuages a fear of the unknown in 'anxious and precarious' China (Zhang, 2020; Kuan, 2015). More broadly, my project expects to contribute to a niche field called literary anthropology.

The Rise of Petition Social Work in China: A Governmentality Perspective

Dayuan Chen, SOAS University of London

Persistent petitioning has long been a concern for China's government and social researchers. With unresolved local complaints and demands, petitioners persist in their quest for redress for years despite authoritarian repression. Since the 2010s, social work has been introduced into the petition system to help resolve and prevent persistent petitioning. Although petitioning remains a research focus in the study of Chinese politics, the recent development of petition social work has not yet received much critical analysis. Foucault's concept of governmentality has been influential in studying how discourses formulated by distributed actors reconfigure the rationalities, techniques, and thus the subject of government. Drawing on this framework, this paper examines policy papers, official media coverage, and case reports published online to trace the rise of petition social work. It argues that non-governmental social work organisations, mass-line organisations (particularly the Women's Federation), and social work scholars have all played significant roles in forming the concept of petition social work. From therapeutic and ecological perspectives, and based on practitioners' experiences, these key actors have developed an analysis of persistent petitioning that diverges from mainstream literature, which typically emphasises moral, political, or economic motives. In their view, persistent petitioners are often driven by chronic, everyday afflictions beyond their conflicts with the government, such as strained family relationships, and thus require emotional and practical supports. With a plurality of actors involved and aiming for transforming persistent petitioners into "active citizens" capable of looking after their own lives and communities, the concept of petition social work participates in the broader party-state discourse of "grassroots social governance". While the effectiveness of petition social work in addressing citizens' difficulties requires further empirical examination, this research highlights the development of non-coercive techniques that render subjects governable, thereby blurring the line between "social governance" and "stability maintenance" under Xi Jinping.

National Form and the Shaping of 'Guohua': Centered on Pang Hiun-Kin's 'Miao People' Series in Two National Art Exhibitions in the 1940s **Weimeng Zhou, China Central Academy of Fine Arts**

During the 1940s, wartime China embraced two editions of the National Art Exhibition under the respective regimes of the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) and the Chinese Communist Party. The definition and criteria of Chinese painting (*guohua*) in these exhibitions represent divergent interpretations of national form shaped by distinct historical contexts and cultural policies. Pang Hiun-Kin, a modern artist who returned to China after studying in France, experienced a critical shift in his artistic style during China's wartime relocation inland. In the early 1940s, he created the *Miao People* series (also known as *Gui Zhou Shan Min Tu*) based on a 1939 field investigation of ethnic minorities in Southwest China, commissioned by the Preparatory Office of the Central Museum of the Nationalist Government. These series of works, at various stages throughout the 1940s, were interpreted either as innovative ethnographic research or as a breakthrough and challenge to traditional Chinese painting conventions. By starting from the iconographic analysis of Pang Hiun-Kin's *Miao People* series in both exhibitions, this presentation examines the contested discourses triggered within different contexts. Through the specific lens of Chinese painting as a representation of national form, I further investigate how China's national identity was defined, expressed, and shaped in artistic practices during the critical transition from the Total War of Resistance against Japan (1937-1945) to the impending national liberation and reunification in 1949.