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*Coming of Age in Interconnected Worlds: Subjectivity, Intersubjectivity, and Temporality in Modern Chinese Literature*

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*The Sinitic Nexus: Becoming Asian in the Chinese-language Literature of Manchuria under Japanese Rule*

<https://dspace.cuni.cz/handle/20.500.11956/178507?locale-attribute=en>

Charles University, Czech Republic, September 2022

Supervisor: Olga Lomová

Keywords: cultural identity, Asianism, Manchukuo literature, modern Chinese literature, Jue Qing, Xiao Song, Gu Ding

Abstract:

This dissertation analyzes modern Chinese-language literature produced in Manchuria under Japanese rule during the 1930s and 1940s. The protagonists in this literature identify not only with Manchuria, China, and Japan but also with East Asia. In my readings, a sense of belonging to China or East Asia, but more often to the latter, is one of the main sources for the cultural identities of these protagonists. In this study, I conceptualize the identities represented in the Chinese-language literature of Manchuria as a complex combination of entangled identities that I call the “Sinitic nexus.” I argue that the “Asian” element of this nexus of identities is constructed by Asianism, or the pan-national discourse of “Asia.” While thus far, the significance of “Asian” identities in the Chinese-language literature of Manchuria has been overlooked both in scholarship on this literature and in the intellectual history of Asianism, I focus on it to reveal the complexity of this literature from a fresh perspective that goes beyond naturalized categories such as nation and the dichotomy of the colonizer and the colonized, and also to show how Asianist thought was creatively reproduced in literature through narratives of “Asia.”

In this study, I examine the work of three Chinese-language writers who were active in the semicolonial setting of Manchukuo (1932–45), a satellite state of the Japanese empire, and argue that their short stories and novels represent diverse configurations of the Sinitic nexus. Xiao Song’s protagonists seek to deny their “Chinese” identity in favour of an “Asian” identity. Some of Gu Ding’s protagonists have no national identity at all and identify only with “East Asia.” Jue Qing, by contrast, portrays protagonists whose “Chinese” identity is reinforced through their essentialized understanding of “Asia.” I argue that the narratives of “Asia” in the Chinese-language literature of Manchukuo resonated with the official ideology of the satellite state in various ways. By analysing the identification process in this literature and setting the stories in question in their sociohistorical context in its full complexity, I offer new interpretations of these works as political acts that in some cases legitimized the state but in others subverted the official ideology. In this dissertation, I engage in dialogue primarily with studies on colonial modernity in East Asian literature. By emphasizing the sophisticated and ambiguous role of Asianism in the Chinese-language literature of Manchukuo, I explore colonial modernity in East Asian literature from a new perspective. My discoveries also seek to contribute to a reassessment of writers who produced complex and intriguing works that have been marginalized in scholarship for political reasons.

Boittout, Joachim

*Sphère publique et émotions en Chine au début du XXe siècle: l'écriture des sentiments politiques dans la presse et la littérature révolutionnaire, 1902–1914*

[Public Sphere and Emotions in Early 20th Century China: the writing of political sentiments in the revolutionary press and literature, 1902–1914]

<https://www.theses.fr/2022EHES0153>

EHESS, France, December 2022

Supervisor: Sebastian Veg

Keywords: Public sphere, Emotions, Press, Xinhai Revolution, Republic of China

Abstract:

During the decade preceding the 1911 Revolution in China, a great number of journals and newspapers were published in student and intellectual circles in Shanghai and Japan. In these publications, the discursive elaboration of a Chinese national sentiment went hand in hand with a re-evaluation of the place of emotions in public discourse. This present dissertation investigates how the revolutionary press, between 1902 and 1914, theorized the discursive usage of collective emotions for the sake of generating a national sentiment and, at the same time, discarded the depiction of private feelings, which were morally devalued. It will be argued that this endeavour was grounded in a re-appropriation of the concept of *qing* 情 (sentiment), leading to a reevaluation of the lyric tradition (*shuqing chuantong* 抒情傳統) derived from classical Chinese literature. Understanding the Xinhai Revolution through collective emotions allows us to re-interpret a pivotal moment in the history of 20th century China by questioning the perception that Chinese nationalism was constructed in a Western-centric manner. In fact, the revolutionary authors and journalists studied in the present dissertation formulated their national sentiment using the terms of an endogenous intellectual tradition. Moreover, my approach aims to provide a deeper understanding of the Chinese public sphere during the period. While the Chinese national sentiment has often been analysed only through its rational and critic potential, I chose to focus on its emotional aspects. This new examination helps us to break away from a longstanding logos-centered approach to public sphere. It will be argued that national sentiment took various forms in the years preceding 1911, before transforming, once the republic was founded in 1912, into what can be termed republican sentiment. This perspective also suggests a new timeline for the Xinhai Revolution that will be described as a process, beginning in 1902 with the founding of Liang Qichao's New Citizen's Journal (*Xinmincongbao* 新民叢報), and ending in 1914 with Yuan Shikai's rise to power and the forced closure of People's Rights (*Minquanbao* 民權報), a daily newspaper affiliated with the Tongmenghui and the original stronghold of a group of popular novelists and journalists, the founders of the school called "Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies" (*Yuanyang hudie pai* 鴛鴦蝴蝶派).

Cui, Qian

*Coming of Age in Interconnected Worlds: Subjectivity, Intersubjectivity, and Temporality in Modern Chinese Literature*

<https://www.zora.uzh.ch/id/eprint/218929/>

University of Zurich, Switzerland, May 2022

Supervisor: Andrea Riemenschmitter

Co-advisors: Sandro Zanetti and Thomas Claviez

Keywords: modern Chinese literature, coming of age, Bildung, world-building, subject formation

Abstract:

This dissertation investigates modern Chinese literary and aesthetic representations of coming of age, in which the collision of official and unofficial discourses sets human subject (trans)formations in motion. Through this investigation, my overarching concern is how the protagonists' pursuit of intersubjective bonding with other beings participates in shaping alternative worldviews that resist a modern anthropocentric and teleological worldview.

My study follows the dialectical tension between Bildung and Antibildung in selected narratives, and looks into how this tension is aesthetically created, resolved, or transcended, all of which play crucial roles in the characters' subject (trans)formations. The narratives suggest new models of epistemology, which give rise to alternative worldviews that are eclipsed in the shadows of dominating ideologies. These worldviews afford utopian pursuits that persistently challenge and destabilize hegemonic social and cultural agencies. Temporality serves as an entry point for my examination of coming of age. I see the formation, transformation, and alteration of the protagonists' time consciousness as a key to investigate their (shifting) worldviews that reflect their subjectivities. Modern Chinese literary narratives are usually characterized by multi-temporality. The generative entanglements and interplays of these temporalities reveal the inner dynamics of the protagonists' changing relationships with the world, their subject (trans)formations, and their pursuits of intersubjectivity with the world and other beings.

Dong, Yufei

*The Cultural Critique and Political Thought of Ku Hung-ming (1857-1928): Revisiting the Emergence of Modern Conservatism in China*

<https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:170226>

University of Geneva, Switzerland, June 2023

Supervisor: Laure (Ning) Zhang

**Keywords:** Ku Hung-ming, Modern Chinese Conservatism, Constitutional Monarchy, An Exhortation to Study, Chang Chih-tung

**Abstract:**

The thesis aims at reexamining the emergence of modern Chinese conservatism via the study on Ku Hung-ming (1857-1928), a representative of that intellectual tradition. Born in Penang and educated in Edinburgh, Ku obtained the degree of Master of Arts from the University of Edinburgh in 1877. Following his graduation, Ku travelled to a number of border cities and treaty ports in China before he entered the office of Chang Chih-tung in 1885. He then became a radical defender of the political order the civilisation of late Qing China. His conservative views on China was unique because it originated from the Scottish Enlightenment and intertwined with his later experience in China. Therefore, his knowledge structure and education experience made him a unique figure at the beginning of modern Chinese conservatism. This thesis will explore three intimate circles at three important stages of his intellectual life: first, the family and community network of Hokkien community in Penang; second, the intellectual tradition of Scottish Enlightenment and its influence on the education of Ku Hung-ming in Edinburgh; and finally, his engagement with the late Qing reform when working in the office of Chang Chih-tung, with a collaboration with a group of people on the publication of *An Exhortation to Study*. After locating Ku's conservatism via these three networks, this thesis will demonstrate Ku's affiliation with constitutional monarchy and attempt to evaluate the boundaries of Ku's ideas and argue that the 1911 Revolution was the turning point that Ku became a reactionary against the Revolution.

Fu, Si-tai

*Portée culturelle, mémorielle et identitaire du mariage entre Continentaux et Taïwanais de souche*  
 [Cultural, Memorial and Identity Significance of Marriage between Mainlanders and Native Taiwanese]  
<https://www.theses.fr/2022EHES0080>

EHESS Paris, France, November 2022

Supervisors: Isabelle Thireau and Samia Ferhat-Dana

Keywords: Migration, Identification, Assimilation, Mixed marriage, Memory Ethnic group

Abstract:

The relocation of the government of the Republic of China to the island of Taiwan after the Second World War was the cause of an ethnic integration that is absolutely unique in the long history of this country. First, it was essentially a merger between two groups of Han Chinese migrants, old and new, rather than a multi-ethnic integration. These early Han migrants had crossed the Taiwan Strait to settle on a small island, Taiwan, an area isolated from mainland China and relatively untouched for fifty years by various armed struggles. This tranquillity allowed for the conservation of the regional culture of South China. This is unprecedented in history. In comparison, the new migrants of 1949 from mainland China had a great influence on Taiwanese society, far exceeding the changes of the previous three hundred years. First of all, it was a migration with a whole national model and a complete governmental organization, mostly military, civil servants and teachers. The number of migrants was also astonishing. After three hundred years, the population of Han Taiwanese and indigenous Taiwanese was about six million, but in just two or three years, these new migrants totalled about one million people. This number was large enough to change the structure of Taiwanese society. Secondly, there were still differences between early and late migrants. Apart from the period of migration and some disparity in customs, the main difference was the period of Japanese colonial rule from 1895 to 1945. The islanders did not directly experience China's tumultuous revolution at the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China, especially the revolutionary movement led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, which ended three thousand years of a dynastic political system. The social changes of the new culture promoted by the May 4th movement in 1919, followed by the Japanese invasion of China, and then the civil war, caused large internal migrations in the mainland. Therefore, when we look at the background of these two ethnic groups, we should not ignore the gap between the first and last migrants over a period of 50 years (from 1895 to 1945). This gap could be the cause of the later ethnic problems and could even be the main source of them. When these two Han groups with different historical memories were forced to live together on this small island of Taiwan, they had no way to escape. They had to accept this arrangement of fate, even if it was against their will. Under these circumstances, ethnic marriages became inevitable and many problems ensued. Moreover, it is difficult for us to judge the effect of this unprecedented ethnic integration correctly or fairly. This study aims to collect, research and analyse all kinds of phenomena in the history of ethnic marriages over the past seventy years. The study also attempts to analyse and explain the influence of this phenomenon on the development of Taiwanese society, in particular, the possibility of resolving ethnic and social conflicts. In this sense, the study I propose aims to present different hypotheses that will perhaps allow us to reflect on building harmonious relations between the different ethnic groups. All this tends towards one objective: to find hope for the inhabitants of Taiwan who lack a common cultural identity, historical memory and national identity.

Gandil, Alexandre

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*La République de Chine (hors Taiwan): construction et territorialisation du politique à travers le détroit de Formose vues depuis Kinmen (Quemoy)*

[The Republic of China (beyond Taiwan). Political construction and territorialization through the Formosa Strait viewed from Kinmen]

<https://www.theses.fr/2022IEPP0035>

Sciences Po, France, November 2022

Supervisor: Françoise Mengin

**Keywords:** China, identity, insularity, Kinmen, nation, Taiwan, political science, political sociology, geography

**Abstract:**

Contrary to generally accepted ideas, the territorial configuration stemming from the partition of China is not perfectly congruent to the median line of the Formosa Strait. Admittedly, Taiwan Island, a border area integrated lately to the Chinese Empire before becoming a Japanese colony (1895–1945), was used as a fall-back base by the Republic of China as early as December 1949, two months after the proclamation of the People's Republic of China. Yet, Chiang Kai-shek also managed to maintain his control at the gates of the mainland he ambioned to recover, by transforming Kinmen (Quemoy) into a stepping stone for a potential counteroffensive. This small archipelago, located a short distance from the Chinese coastline, was therefore subjected to military administration until 1992, while Taiwan Island became the crucible of the Republic of China's indigenization post-1949 – and of its democratization post 1987. In other words, although nothing predestined Kinmen to be cut off from the Chinese mainland and governed from the other side of the Formosa Strait, the small archipelago is now placed under the sovereignty of a state conveying an imagined community supposed to exclude it: the Republic of China (Taiwan). By exploring the mismatch between the limits of the Taiwanese imagined community and the territorial borders of the Republic of China, this thesis – coming under historical sociology and comparative politics, and nourished by a 12-month field survey – reintroduces the place and the role assigned to Kinmen inhabitants, as well as the place and the role Kinmen inhabitants have assigned to themselves, within the framework of cross-Strait relations since 1949.



García-Noblejas Floriano, Belén

*China's Official Counterterrorism Discourse as a Legitimizing Tool*

<https://repositorio.uam.es/handle/10486/706349>

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain, December 2022

Supervisors: Mario Esteban Rodríguez and Carola García-Calvo Rosell

Keywords: China, Counterterrorism, Legitimacy, Critical Discourse Analysis

Abstract:

Given the transnational nature of the fourth wave of terrorism and its relationship with religious extremism, the United Nations has proposed since 2006 to strengthen efforts and international consensus to prevent violent extremism and international terrorism. The expansion of China's influence, as well as its increasingly evident implication in non-traditional global threats, raised questions regarding the possible impact of its measures against international terrorism. Therefore, in order to optimize the possibilities and efficiency of international cooperation in this matter, it is crucial to gain a better understanding of China's interpretation and reaction to the threat within its local context, and in accordance with its national priorities. The representation of terrorism in China is framed within a three-dimensional threat called the "Three Evil Forces" (composed of terrorism, separatism and extremism). In accordance with China's conceptualization and reaction to the threat, Critical Terrorism Studies is applied as a theoretical framework to explore its official discourse on terrorism as a legitimizing tool for the Communist Party of China (CPC), both at the national and international levels. In this regard, the conceptual framework responds to a study of the evolution of the main sources of Party legitimacy since the leadership of Mao Zedong. Starting from the theoretical knowledge gathered through the previous literature review, the Critical Terrorism Studies paradigm, and studies on legitimacy in China, the research proceeds with a holistic analysis of the official discourse. Through a synergistic quantitative (Corpus Linguistics) and qualitative (Critical Discourse Analysis) methodology, this thesis presents the main results of a detailed examination of two main sources: the official reports of the National Congresses of the Communist Party of China between 1992 and 2017; and the Xinjiang White Papers between 2002 and 2019. Overall, this research ultimately aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of China's official discourse on terrorism and its direct relationship to maintaining and promoting Party legitimacy as a top priority.

Hompot, Sebestyén

*Mainland China's Global Historiography in Search of Grand Narratives: A Discourse-Analytical Case Study of Recent Historiography on the Zheng He Maritime Missions (1405–1433 CE)*

<https://theses.univie.ac.at/detail/66172>

University of Vienna, Austria, June 2023

Supervisor: Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik

**Keywords:** Zheng He, global history, Chinese historiography, discourse analysis, Belt & Road Initiative

**Abstract:**

Ludovico di Giura's translation of the *Liaozhai zhiyi* in Italian, published in 1955, has been the first and the most complete translation in Western languages. Ludovico di Giura arrived in China as a military doctor and a diplomat at the Italian legation of Beijing in 1900 and remained in China for almost three decades. His first Italian translation of 99 stories from the *Liaozhai zhiyi* was published in 1926. In the following years he also published translations from the *Lunyu* and *Honglongmeng*, and of Chinese poetry. This dissertation is the first study of Ludovico di Giura's translation of the *Liaozhai zhiyi*. Adopting the methodology of translation studies, and especially Holmes' "Product-oriented DTS" and Bassnett and Lefevere's "Cultural Translation Theory", it investigates the genesis of the integral translation of the *Liaozhai zhiyi* in Italian language and of the translation's strategies adopted by Di Giura in his work, with special reference to the notion of "functional equivalence".

Li, Zihan

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*La transmission des manuscrits des dongba: Système d'écriture, rituels religieux et changements historiques chez les Naxi du Yunnan*

[The Transmission of Dongba Manuscripts: Writing system, Religious Rituals and Historical Changes among the Naxi of Yunnan in Chi]

<https://www.theses.fr/2022PA100098>

Université Paris Nanterre, France, November 2022

Supervisor: Brigitte Baptandier

Keywords: China, ethnicity, heritage, politics, shamanism, social changes, writing, Yunnan

Abstract:

This dissertation examines the society and religion of the Naxi, a Tibeto-Burman-speaking population of north-western Yunnan, recognised as the 'Naxi nationality' (*naxizu* 纳西族 in Mandarin) by the Chinese state during the 'ethnic classification' programme (1950–1960).

The Dongba are Naxi religious specialists who are known in particular for possessing a ritual pictographic writing that they alone master. Before the 1950s, the Dongba handed down their religious knowledge from father to son. But during the Maoist period they suffered severe repression, their books were confiscated and lineage-transmission was interrupted. In this dissertation, I analyse new forms of transmission that have emerged since the so-called 'religious revival' in the 1980s.

My research focuses on two contrasting ethnographic case studies. My first fieldwork was in Baidi, the holy land of the Dongba, located in the Tibetan autonomous prefecture of Diqing. A Dongba training school was founded in Baidi in 1998 by a retired Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cadre. The school is now run by a layman, not a Dongba trained within his family, but who – thanks to his politically approved 'class identity' (as a 'poor peasant') – was able to study in secret the religious manuscripts confiscated by the government. Since China signed the UNESCO 'Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage' in 2003, the state has certified this school, thus raising new political and economic stakes for residents of Baidi. My other fieldwork is in Lijiang, the political capital of the Naxi, which was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1997. There, the state organises religious transmission based on the official translation of the ritual corpus confiscated during the Maoist era. This takeover is intended to attract tourists to the region and generate economic income, while expunging the 'Naxi religion' by transforming it into an officially approved 'Dongba culture'.

The first part of the dissertation examines the specificities of Naxi society, its origin and characteristics. Then it presents the grouping of ethnicities that gave rise to what is now called the 'Naxi nationality'. Finally, it discusses the singularities that made the Naxi known, together with their kinship system and their systems of writing, as a 'living fossil'. In the second part, I present the religion of the Naxi: their ritual specialists, the Dongba, their ceremonies and their manuscripts, their secret writing named *senjulujiu* and their traditional mode of transmission. In the third part of the dissertation, I discuss the mode of transmission of what has now become 'Dongba culture' and oppose the case of Baidi to that of Lijiang.

Losavio, Cinzia

*La stratification des migrants chinois de l'intérieur au service de la croissance urbaine et économique: les processus différenciés d'ancrage résidentiel à Zhuhai au prisme de l'informalité*

[Stratifying Chinese internal migrants to serve urban and economic growth: the differentiated processes of residential anchoring in Zhuhai through the prism of informality]

<http://www.theses.fr/2022PA01H098/document>

Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University, France, November 2022

Supervisor: Natacha Aveline-Dubach

Keywords: Geography, Internal migrants, urban housing, informality, point-based hukou system, small property rights housing

Abstract:

This research investigates the residential anchoring of the Chinese internal migrants as part of their urban integration process. The prism of residential anchoring is a crucial entry point to explore the way in which internal migrants participate in the socio-spatial reconfiguration of urban space. That is especially due to the central role that the residential real estate market has been playing in the growth strategies of the Chinese “Developmental State” as well as to the economic and symbolic functions that housing covers for urban societies.

Standing at the crossroads of human geography, urban geography and political sociology, this thesis takes as a case study the city of Zhuhai (Guangdong), where I carried out a two-year fieldwork investigation. The methodology relies on participant observation, ethnographic fieldwork, semi-structured interviews, and public policy analysis. I conducted interviews with more than 140 people, including 128 migrants, a dozen local officials, parastatal organizations, public developers, and local landlords. The analysis focuses on both formal and informal modalities of urban integration processes through a conceptual framework based on an “integrated definition of informality”.

The research findings shed light on a selective and highly competitive model of integration. This model, which reinforces the socio-spatial differentiation of urban space, produces interstices of informality. Within these “gray spaces”, low-skilled migrants develop their own residential and urban integration strategies, gaining sometimes access, albeit informally, to home ownership.

Ngo, Katherine

*Primary Education in the Qing dynasty: Unlocking the Treasury of Elementary Learning (Youxue qionglin 幼學瓊林)*

University of Wales Trinity Saint David, UK, May 2022

Supervisor: Thomas Jansen

Abstract:

The importance of early influences on the child learner was well-accepted in pre-modern Chinese scholarship. However, the study of traditional Chinese elementary education and its related texts have been notably limited throughout history. This study aims to address the imbalance by analysing the primary educational concerns and strategies underlying the Qing dynasty elementary primer, the *Youxue qionglin* 幼學瓊林 (*Treasury of elementary learning*). The main research questions are: (1) What are the main philosophical and intellectual trends identifiable in Qing dynasty elementary education? (2) How are these early modern Chinese elementary educational theories and practices expressed through the textual information and literary structures of the *Treasury*? (3) How does the *Treasury* mediate the child's learning process and how is this significant for modern education scholars?

The research argues that elementary learning in the Qing dynasty offered a sophisticated and complex educational agenda. The *Treasury* advanced diverse learning goals that were shaped by intellectual trends. This study uses the concept of interpretive communities to explore how socio-political influences and the different schools of thought – the school of principle, the school of heart-mind, and practical learning – were reflected in the composition of the text. As such, examination preparation, moral development and textual scholarship training were divergent concerns in the primer. Learning practices surrounding the *Treasury*'s topical categorisation, chapter structure, interlinear annotations, literary allusions, ritual expressions, exemplary figures, and mnemonic techniques are first evaluated by reference to Qing prescriptive teaching discourse and intellectual traditions. The early modern pedagogy manifested in the text is further corroborated by modern psychological and education research. As a microcosm of a rich educational tradition, the findings from the *Treasury* are then framed in terms of aspects of the curriculum: content, skills, learning approaches and teaching strategies, to facilitate broader transcultural dialogue in contemporary education.

Ngo, Kelly

*A Cultural Memory Study of Early Tang Political Thought in the Essentials for Bringing about Order from Assembled Texts (Qunshu zhiyao 群書治要)*

University of Wales Trinity Saint David, UK, November 2022

Supervisor: Thomas Jansen

Abstract:

An imperially-commissioned statecraft reference for Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 626–649) of Tang China, the *Qunshu zhiyao* 群書治要 (*Essentials* for bringing about order from assembled texts) presents a unique window into the political discourse underpinning one of the most successful rulerships in the history of imperial China. Analysing the *Essentials* through the lens of cultural memory, this study offers insight into its formation, transmission, and contribution to the political thought and practice of Taizong's reign, which is known as the 'Zhenguan 貞觀 era'. Cultural memory theory identifies the *Essentials* as an institutional communication concerning the past as remembered from compiled excerpts of selected writings. The normative and formative functions of its cultural knowledge provide guidance in the art of bringing about order in the life of the individual as well as the state, and reinforce contemporary culture by espousing shared values of the ruling elite. Normative guidance from historical officials of good character and competence (the 'worthy') defines exemplary public service for the Zhenguan era and demonstrates why worthy personnel must be at the heart of government and knowledge transmission. The *Essentials* is seen to guide the Zhenguan court and shape their collective identity through narratives about remonstrance, historical remonstrations that invoked the past, and serving as a common sourcebook of statecraft. Articulating the theoretical basis for a practice of administration that became synonymous with good governance, the *Essentials* is seen to disseminate the political norms and values of the Zhenguan government to later courts in China and abroad. Evidence of the *Essentials* shaping the cultural memory of Japan for a much longer period compared to China furthers our understanding of the conditions conducive to the continuity of cultural meaning within a society and the regeneration of cultural memory within a region. This study highlights the potentiality for further research on the *Essentials* as a subject of political theory and education, as well as cultural history and literature.

Picerni, Federico

*The Aesthetic of Labour: Social and Textual Practice of the Picun Literature Group*  
<http://dspace.unive.it/bitstream/handle/10579/22732/956424-1242470.pdf?sequence=2>

Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia, Italy, July 2022

Supervisors: Nicoletta Pesaro (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia) and Barbara Mittler (Universität Heidelberg)

Keywords: Chinese Workers Literature, Picun, Contemporary Chinese Literature

Abstract:

This thesis contributes to an emerging scholarship on contemporary Chinese workers' literature by addressing the Picun Literature Group as a specific case study, within the broader historical context of the literary output produced by Chinese workers in the past and present. By so doing, the thesis' overall aim is to unpack the formative process of the worker author as a distinct figure in the literary field. In order to do so, it carries out a materialist critique of literary texts and authors, focusing on how they process (rather than simply reflect) the more material dynamics of literary production (other agents beside the authors) as well as its ideological/discursive dimension.

In the first part of the thesis, a discussion on the theoretical question of the consecration or exclusion of subaltern authors is discussed is substantiated by an examination of how the New Culture Movement, proletarian literature, and worker-peasant-soldier literature approached it. Sustained by a thoroughgoing review of the existing scholarship, the thesis argues that the dichotomy of aesthetic value versus social relevance has overwhelmingly shaped much of the discussion. It then delves more specifically into the Picun Literature Group by presenting the backdrop and development of the wider community it is part of, and advances the idea that the practice of the group constitutes a micro-literary mode of production (Eagleton), characterised by the interaction between three sets of agents, i.e. activists, authors, and mediators.

The second part deals with texts with four individual case studies, selected according to the relevance of individual authors in sketching out connections and disconnections with broader themes of workers' literature or literary discourse. The first case is Fan Yusu and the surrounding debate to address the problem of how literary quality is theorised and perceived. The second case is Xiao Hai and the way his practice blurs the usual distinction between "high" and "low" writing, showing that social themes can intermingle with artistic quality and commitment. The case of Xu Liangyuan shows yet another literary strategy, this one based on a Maoist-resounding glorification of labour, although this grandiloquence can likewise be interpreted critically by way of its own anachronism. Nostalgia and rural home come up in the case of Li Ruo, whose representation of the countryside is crucially influenced by the author's changed identity following her experience as a migrant labourer. Finally, the reduction of workers' literature to social commentary is questioned through the case of Wan Huashan, whose technical sophistication and formal experimentation prove a strong degree of literary awareness to negotiate between an overwhelming social background and literary fictionality.

The thesis concludes that the living practice of the authors examined throughout the book challenge some established dichotomies, primarily the opposition of literary value and social relevance (or commitment), on the one hand, and the strict division of authors and aesthetics into – borrowing van Crevel's categories – "elevated" (or intellectual) and "earthly" (or popular). In fact, the combination of the two is a distinctive feature of this body of writing. Perhaps even more fundamentally, the thesis argues that workers' literature should be unpacked as a plurality of distinct voices put together by a shared background which often determines common preoccupations of aesthetic and practical nature.

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*Lingvistická etnobotanika: Multidisciplinární přístupy k výzkumu čínských rostlinovědných znalostních komplexů*

[Linguistic Ethnobotany: Multidisciplinary approaches to the study of the Chinese plant-studying knowledge complexes]

[https://stag.upol.cz/portal/studium/prohlizeni.html?pc\\_pagenavigationalstate=AAAAAQAEOTU5MBMBAAAAAQAIc3RhdGVlZXkAAAAABABQtOTIvMzM](https://stag.upol.cz/portal/studium/prohlizeni.html?pc_pagenavigationalstate=AAAAAQAEOTU5MBMBAAAAAQAIc3RhdGVlZXkAAAAABABQtOTIvMzM)

Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic, June 2023

Supervisor: František Kratochvíl

**Keywords:** ethnobotany, botany, China, Brassica, multidisciplinary research, food studies, digital humanities, ideology, plants, history of sciences

**Abstract:**

This doctoral research was primarily aimed at discovering the intersection between the sciences that have historically studied, and presently continue to study, cultivated plants. The importance of plants has been given to the ancient world, at both extremes of the Eurasian cultural continuum. The beginning of interest in the study of plants can be traced back to the early days of writing. The first treatises compiling extensive knowledge about plants date from this period, as exemplified by ancient Roman-Greek classics such as Theophrastus, Pliny, and Pedanius Dioscorides. The aim of this research was to provide an analytical summary and classify the existing study of plants, from the early development to the modern concept, and to compare the two traditions (Chinese and European) with respect to their cultural-philosophical-linguistic specifics. Particular attention was paid to a unique genre of the Chinese plant tradition, the so-called famine literature, which has no parallel in the European context. The so-called Esculentist Movement, a series of Ming-dynasty-era writings on famine food, as coined by Joseph Needham and his collaborators, however, proved to be a very strong ideological manifest whose main purpose was to serve the legitimisation of the imperial rule, and an extension of Confucian ideals, namely the maintaining of the Mandate of Heaven and fulfilling the role of a benevolent and caring father to his people by providing them with means of survival in times of hardship. Moreover, it was discovered that the truly pragmatic and famine-preventive literature could be traced to the 6th-century agricultural treatise, *Qimin Yaoshu*, whose primary focus on crop production, harvesting, processing and long-term preservation plays a vital role in maintaining flexible subsistence patterns in China. This research attempted to introduce approaches to the subject of cultural plants from different perspectives, especially from the perspective of environmental history, and the history of every day, which, in the form of environmental and social crises could be considered the driving force of history.



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*Computerlinguistische Datierung schriftsprachlicher chinesischer Texte*

[Computational Methods for Dating Literary Chinese Texts]

<https://doi.org/10.11588/hasp.1153>

Universität Trier, Germany, December 2022

Supervisors: Christian Soffel and Christof Schöch

**Keywords:** Datierung, Computerlinguistik, Klassisches Chinesisch, Schriftsprachliches Chinesisch; Statistische Sprachmodelle; Datenbank, Chinesisch, Hanyu da cidian 漢語大詞典; Fälschung, Sprachwandel, Wortschatzwandel; Neologismus, Dynastiegeschichten; zhengshi 正史; difangzhi 地方誌; CBDB; n-Gramm, Korpus <Linguistik>, Historische Lexikografie, Tokenizer

**Abstract:**

The chronological classification of texts can be crucial for clarifying authenticity and interpretation. For several Western languages, statistical language models (SLMs), amongst other methods, have been proven useful for automatically assigning timespan (*chronon*) labels to texts. This is made possible by changes in style, grammar, vocabulary, and phonology. When it comes to Classical and Literary Chinese sources, dating can be complicated not only by the existence of forgeries, complex textual lineages, and obscure authorship, but also the fact that many genres attempted to remain faithful to ancient rhetorical and linguistic patterns. Additionally, major phonological changes are not often reflected in Chinese script. The present study assesses both new and established computational dating methods and examines related issues in computational processing of Literary Chinese.

The history of the Chinese written language is the starting point for this study. On the basis of official dynastic histories (*zhengshi* 正史), it is shown that both grammatical and lexical changes can give clues to the time of production, even within a corpus of stylistically homogenous texts. Tied to the appearance of new concepts, lexical innovation is found to be a key indicator of the time of a text's creation.

Readers are then introduced to the current state of research on computational and philological methods of textual dating, emphasizing SLMs. The problems of Chinese word segmentation, the lack of diachronic Chinese corpora, as well as recognition of named entities and temporal expressions are discussed. A diachronic Chinese lexeme database for making lexical changes useful for dating is constructed from the earliest word use attestations (*loci classici*) sourced from a digital version of the *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大詞典.

The main part of the study is dedicated to the development, testing, and comparison of dating methods for Literary Chinese texts. SLMs are adapted to be used with Chinese n-gram and plain text corpora. Text neologism profiles, generated from the lexeme database, are introduced as an innovative approach to emphasize lexicalization in automated dating. Accuracy of dating is increased by the usage of dated proper names and temporal expressions. In an attempt to treat time as a continuous variable, the average year of lexicalization (AYL) of words in a given text is also tested as a dating indicator.

It is found that SLMs can be successfully employed for assigning chronological categories to Literary Chinese texts. However, neologism profiles prove more robust against the rigidity of the written language, require less specific training, and can easily be combined with and aid the work of a philologist. Nevertheless, some Classical texts remain resistant to a linguistic analysis. All three evaluated methods can be tested through a ready-to-use online tool, VisualTime, developed by the author as part of this study (<https://visualtime.schalmey.de>).

Tassin, Jean

*Revenir à la terre: une sociologie des espaces marchands de l'agroécologie en Chine*

[Back to the land: a sociology of agroecology market spaces in China]

<https://laas.hal.science/SOCIOLOGIE/tel-03909395v1>

École Normale Supérieure de Lyon and 华东师范大学 (East China Normal University) (joint PhD),  
France and China, September 2022

Supervisors: Laurence Roulleau-Berger and Jun Wen

Keywords: Agroecology networks, food safety, peasant farming, e-commerce

Abstract:

My doctoral research studies movements to promote a social agroecology in contemporary China. Since the mid-2000s, the agri-food context in China has been marked by two mutually reinforcing phenomena. The food scandals that regularly hit the headlines have triggered the development of new food supply systems, notably illustrated by short supply chains and the promotion of “local” and “quality” agricultural products. While the new forms of consumption associated with these practices have already been discussed in the literature, particularly in relation to urban and affluent populations, our research focuses on the links between the various rural and urban networks and the circulation of knowledge between local, national and even transnational scales in these areas. “Ecological spaces” are constructed at the crossroad between different spheres – academic, legal, political – as public arenas of the agri-food worlds.

My thesis is built on the following hypothesis: Faced with the multiplication of distrust regimes in the agri-food worlds in contemporary China, the cooperation of different categories of “ethical consumption” entrepreneurs participates in producing ecological spaces where regimes of trust are recomposed. These spaces are interconnected with each other by market arrangements that engage in negotiations on autonomy and food ethics. The regimes of mistrust and trust in co-presence and in tension in collective actions contribute to actualising green capitalism, building a new negotiated order in an authoritarian context.

The research is built on three sociological approaches: economic sociology, through the study of market interactions around food short supply chains and green capitalism; rural sociology, through the analysis of a food ethic of agroecology in Chinese southwest as a process of valorisation of cultural heritages and agricultural know-how in disuse; political sociology, by linking local forms of mobilisations for access to land, emerging figures of agroecology moral entrepreneurs and international environmental mobilisations. My work is based on a multi-sited ethnographic survey, carried out between 2017 and 2020, based on in situ observations in production, processing and distribution sites of peasant products in Guangxi and Yunnan, as well as on participant observation in an international research programme on Chinese terroir products, organised by actors of these networks (2019 - 2021). The ethnographic fieldwork includes about 50 individual and collective interviews with actors of peasant agriculture networks and a four-year monitoring of digital interactions and online publications through different social networks.

Tran, Phung

*L'écriture du monde rural chez Mo Yan: modernité et engagement littéraires*

[Mo Yan's Rural Writing: Rural Modernity and Literary Transfiguration]

<https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:167453>

University of Geneva, Switzerland, February 2023

Supervisor: Laure (Ning) Zhang

**Keywords:** Mo Yan, rural fiction, rurality, modernity, metafictional devices

**Abstract:**

This thesis, devoted to the rural narratives of Chinese writer Mo Yan, investigates in three directions. First, his stories are approached from the perspective of the Chinese literary tradition of rural fiction, one of the most important of the 20th century. By means of a comparative study with the most significant representatives of this tradition, the research highlights the part of the heritage pursued and contested by Mo Yan, as well as his personal contribution. Secondly, the thesis puts into perspective the writer's socio-historical perspective on rural China in the second half of the twentieth century. The singular analysis of Mo Yan's various rural narratives focuses on the painting of the peasant condition in the wake of successive rural reforms and historical violence. Thirdly, Mo Yan's rural fiction is apprehended in the light of his literary project. A cross-reading of the stories and an analysis of the narrative and metafictional devices shed light on three aesthetic principles in particular - literary innovation, literary transfiguration of history and self-reflection - that are fundamental to understanding the writer's creation.

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*Du yuefu au gexing: carrière d'une poésie chantée dans la Chine du haut Moyen Âge (IIIe-VIe s.)*

[From Yuefu to Gexing: The Path of a Sung Poetry in Early Medieval China (3–6th Century)]

<https://www.theses.fr/2022INAL0014>

Institut national des Langues et Civilisations orientales, France, September 2022

Supervisors: Frédéric Wang and Valérie Lavoix

Keywords: Music office, yuefu-ballad, folklore, persona, contrafactum, palimpsest, literati circles, gexing, Six Dynasties

Abstract:

This dissertation aims to study a specific pseudo-genre of sung poetry whose very name is borrowed from an imperial musical institution, the Music Office (Yuefu), and which, by acting as a bridge between folklore and the literati culture, as a poetry of performance and of renewed palimpsest, has in many ways influenced the course of Chinese classical poetry.

Through a review of the problematical definition of yuefu, this study attempts to reveal the extent to which the evolution of music or, more precisely, of musical aesthetic, has conditioned the development of poetry in Early Medieval China, firstly through the collection of folk songs with which the Bureau was entrusted, and secondly through the assimilation of folklore by the literati.

By going backwards to the Han Dynasty and moving forward to the beginning of the Tang Dynasty, this research analyses the core of “poem making”, with the ideal medium provided by the poetic body that is formed under the name of yuefu: from metrical to rhetoric, from thematic to aesthetic.

*Gexing*, a derivative of yuefu itself, but no less a form of poetry at the confluence of the literary practices of the Early Middle Ages, comes as the end point of this research. It is a demonstration of the dynamics of the yuefu poetry: through recalling a past which it inherits and reforms, it asserts itself in the present and projects a path towards the future.

Zhu, Longjie

*Étude sur une construction straussienne des Classiques en Chine: 2000–2015*

[A study of a Straussian construction of Classics in China: 2000–2015]

<https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:170058>

University of Geneva, Switzerland, June 2023

Supervisor: Laure (Ning) Zhang

**Keywords:** The Classics and Interpretations collection, The Straussian paradigm, The quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns

**Abstract:**

This thesis consists essentially of a critical study of the Classics and Interpretations collection (*jīngdiǎn yǔ jiěshì* 經典與解釋), a "Straussian" construction of Western and Chinese classics in the Chinese language led by Liu Xiaofeng 劉小楓, privately in China, between 2000–2015. It demonstrates the intellectual originality of this collection, which in 2015 brings together 360 Western classics and their interpretations translated into Chinese, and Chinese classics and their re-edited interpretations, in a single corpus according to the "Straussian paradigm", a definition of classics put forward by the philosopher Leo Strauss. It also shows how this paradigm was transgressively used by Liu to re-establish a corpus of Confucian classics in this collection. Finally, through an institutional approach, it shows how this collection has been integrated into two higher education and research programs within Chinese universities.