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Amate Nuñez, Patricia 

*Sociedad, género y cultura. Análisis sociolingüístico de la novela Sueño en el Pabellón Rojo (紅樓夢)* 

[Society, Gender and Culture. Sociolinguistic analysis of the novel Dream of the Red Chamber (紅樓夢)]

Universidad de Almería, Spain, September 2024

Supervisors: Francisco Joaquin Garcia Marcos (Universidad de Almería), Pedro San Gines Aguilar (Universidad de Granada) and Wei Zhao (北京师范大学)

Keywords: Dream of the Red Chamber, ethnography of communication, sociolinguistics, Confucianism, gender, female characters

Abstract:

This thesis deals with the sociolinguistic analysis from a gender perspective of women's language within the Confucian universe in the novel Dream of the Red Chamber.

Dream of the Red Chamber is regarded as one of the four classics of Chinese literature. It is a complex work that has given rise to the creation of the field of study known as Redology, 紅學 Hong Xue. The novel has been compared by translators and sinologists to Western literary canons: Dante's The Divine Comedy, Shakespeare's theatre or Cervantes' The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha.

The conceptual axes on which the interpretative reading of the corpus of study of this thesis is based are: Halliday (1978) Language as social semiotic. The social Interpretation of language and meaning, Van Dijk (1977) Text and context. Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse, Dell Hymes (1974) Foundations in sociolingüístico: an ethnographic approach, and Scott (1986) Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis.

The main objectives proposed for this thesis are:

1. To analyze the novel Dream of the Red Chamber from a sociolinguistic and gender perspective.
2. To include literature as a sociolinguistic variety of a speech community.

In order to achieve these general objectives, the following specific objectives have been defined:

1. To assess the viability of employing ethnography of communication to analyze the novel Dream of the Red Chamber.
2. To identify the Confucian norms' influence on the ends pursued by the characters.

In order to achieve these goals, 982 dialogues from the novel have been analyzed using the SPEAKING model proposed by Hymes (1974).

A sociolinguistic analysis of the interactions between characters has yielded the following results:

1. The same communicative end can be pursued in different ways by each character,
2. The manner in which a character employs each SPEAKING parameter determines whether or not they successfully achieve their communicative ends,
3. Some characters present a similar communicative pattern among themselves.

The aforementioned results have led to the following conclusions:

1. Sociolinguistics is a valid scientific discipline for analyzing Dream of the Red Chamber.
2. The application of the SPEAKING model has enabled us to ascertain information regarding the sociolinguistic behavior of the characters under analysis.

3. The explicit presence of the norm parameter in communicative events has turned out to be insufficient in number to show a direct influence on the ends pursued by the characters.

The qualitative analysis of all parameters collectively provides the necessary information to establish the influence that the Confucian norm has on the communicative events of the characters. This conclusion is at odds with the first initial research hypothesis, “the fact that the norm parameter is present in every communicative event demonstrates the influence of Confucian ethics on the ends pursued by the characters”.

The conclusions drawn about gender relations in the novel have demonstrated that:

1. Male and female spaces are not always respected and the status of women within the family is not fixed,
2. The question of women’s subordination is determined by the family role and the social class they hold.

Bennett, Hannah

*Gender, Class, and Migration at Play: Training Affect in China's Golf Courses* 

SOAS, University of London, UK, November 2023

Supervisor: Jakob Klein

Keywords: Gender, Class, Work, Professionalism, Affective Labour, Vocational Education, Migration

Abstract:

By framing golf as a socially constituted leisure activity rather than focusing on the technicalities of the sport, this project acts as a lens through which to view a number of complex issues located at the forefront of the anthropology of China: issues such as gender, class, and labour. This thesis takes the example of caddies as a micro-exploration to enable macro-analysis. Though often seen as on the fringes of society, the golf industry has seen growth despite governmental moratoriums. This has caused golf in China to be in a period of 'spring': of growth, transformation, and adaptation. Indeed, as the golf industry has adapted, so too have caddie employment practices reacted to the unsteady position of golf in China and responded to recruitment issues caused by the one child policy and vocational education. The result has been a reluctant shift from an industry which only employs young women, to one which predominantly employs interns, and thus has been forced to employ an increasing number of men. Despite this, affective labour remains central to the role. This thesis argues that by expanding definitions of what it means to be a professional, affective labour emerges as a type of professionalism. It is something which is actively trained and is regulated in accordance with the company's specifications. This thesis is based on a year of fieldwork, predominantly training to work as a caddie at Golden Valley, and two years of pre-field interviews, and time spent at multiple driving ranges.



Berdajs, Tina

*Issues of Dating and Provenance of the East Asian Ceramic Vessels in Slovene Museum Collections* 

Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, September 2023

Supervisor: Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik

Co-advisors: Mateja Kos Zabel and Sabrina Ra

Keywords: East Asian Ceramics, Porcelain, Provenance, Slovene Museum Collections

Abstract:


The doctoral dissertation focuses on the culture of collecting, heritage studies, and material culture in both art history and sinology. The author analyses East Asian ceramics from selected collections kept in Slovene museums. This research sheds light on objects, previously rather neglected and sometimes forgotten, mostly due to lack of specialized knowledge about East Asian ceramics. Until today, over 21 different collections and objects were identified. Ceramic objects are present in at least eleven of these collections and have been analysed for this doctoral thesis. Four collections from Slovene museums have been chosen as the main part of this study: the Ceramics Collection at the National Museum of Slovenia, the Skušek Collection at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, the East Asian ceramics in the collection of Regional Museum Ptuj-Ormož, and the East Asian ceramics in the Cultural History Collection of Celje Regional Museum.

The main research question of this doctoral dissertation is thus: what kind of methodological issues are we facing when researching East Asian ceramics in Slovenia and how do we establish appropriate criteria and methods on the basis of which we can more precisely date and determine the provenance of individual pieces of ceramic vessels of East Asian origin in the collections of Slovenian museums and other public institutions in the broader time frame from the 17th to the early 20th centuries?

The main research question is accompanied and supplemented by the following sub-questions: a) how individual pieces of ceramics and porcelain of East Asian origin reached the Slovenian territory, and what parallels can we draw within the context of collecting such objects over certain periods of time in the wider European area; b) who were the individuals who collected East Asian ceramics and what was their status; c) what do the objects in question reveal about the collecting approaches or collecting practices of their original owners; d) how such items ended up in museums and gained the status of museum items; e) how is the lack of specific knowledge and basic information in identification and treatment of East Asian objects related to the issues of dating and determining provenance we face when researching; f) what causes problems of dating and determining provenance and how can we establish a suitable methodological framework for correct dating and determination of provenance; g) how did the context of the objects (and the collections in which they are kept) change from their initial production, through the intercultural transfers, all the way to the final acquisition of museum item status?

This dissertation thus proposes a framework to accurately date and determine the provenance of East Asian ceramics in Slovene museum collections. It addresses challenges faced by researchers studying these objects, providing reliable research approaches for proper documentation and provenance research of the objects. The primary research is largely based on the practical exploration of East Asian collections as well as individual ceramic objects held in them and largely incorporates new data and findings from my own empirical research (inventory, identification, and categorization of individual objects and collections). This

research takes into account the physical characteristics of objects (material, shape, motifs, stylization of paintings and patterns), their production, and use in the primary context. To transfer and understand the cultural environment in the context of the museum, older museum documents, old issues of newspapers, old and new museum inventory books, and a wider selection of relevant secondary literary sources in various fields has been studied and examined.

Bernardi Junqueira, Luis Fernando 

*The Science of the Spirit: Psychological Research, Healthcare and the Revival of the Occult in a Modernising China, 1900–1949*

University College London, United Kingdom, October 2023

Supervisors: Vivienne Lo and Sonu Shamdasani

**Keywords:** psychological research; hypnotism; spiritualism; medicine; science; esotericism; Republican China; modern China; global history

**Abstract:**

How did a new science initially promoted by only a few individuals eventually become a widespread cultural phenomenon practised by thousands of people? My thesis examines the transnational history of psychical research in Republican China (1912–1949), a field dedicated to the scientific investigation of paranormal phenomena like hypnotism and mediumship. Originating in late 19th-century Britain, psychical research captivated the imagination of scientists and intellectuals worldwide, who saw in it the potential to expand the boundaries of science beyond the material world. The field promised to showcase the supremacy of mind over matter, revealing exceptional human abilities such as self-healing and mind-reading. As China was being ravaged by imperialism and civil wars, Republican reformers lauded psychical research as a scientific means to enhance the Chinese mind by unlocking hidden psychic powers. This, it was believed, would save China from the grip of Western materialism, paving the way for a superior form of ‘spiritual modernity’ rooted in science, tradition and mental reality.

Through the perspectives of transnational history and boundary-work, my thesis examines how Republican reformers appropriated psychical research in their modernisation efforts – and more specifically, how it impacted 20th-century Chinese notions of health and religious experience. I argue that the Chinese engagement with the field must be seen as the interplay between local interests and global movements which denounced Western modernity as materialistic and dehumanising. Challenging old-fashioned narratives that science inevitably leads to secularisation, I demonstrate how psychical research reignited the interest of highly-educated Chinese reformers in spiritual matters and phenomena previously deemed ‘superstitious’. My thesis is based on a hitherto unexplored collection of sources combined with a close engagement with scholarship in eight languages. It is concerned with the interplay between local and global dynamics, lay and expert knowledge, and the boundaries between what was perceived as ‘scientific’ and ‘non-scientific’ in early 20th-century China. My research upsets prevailing narratives that construe China’s modernity as a derivative of Western standards. It makes critical contributions to the historiography of medicine, showcasing the pluralistic healing landscape of the Republican era and the creative ways the Chinese appropriated psychological knowledge. It also fills vital gaps in religious and intellectual history, uncovering vast networks of social movements previously unknown in Chinese academic literature. In short, my thesis opens new research fronts, revolutionising our understanding of how tradition, the psychological disciplines and global forces shaped China’s construction of its own modernity.

Chapter 1 examines the introduction of psychical research in China through newspapers, manuals and stage performances. Chapter 2 analyses the rise of associations for xinling kexue 心靈科學 (Spiritual Science) – the Sino-Japanese expression of psychical research – in Republican Shanghai. Chapter 3 delves into hypnotism, a method hailed by Chinese reformers as a powerful means to craft the ‘ideal’ Chinese

citizen and, thereby, accomplish the Republican revolution. Chapter 4 investigates how Chinese spiritual scientists adopted psychical research to reassess the causes of traditional occult practices like ritual healing and mediumship. Chapter 5 explores how Chinese occultists invoked Spiritual Science to legitimise their activities in a modernising world.

This PhD thesis won the ‘2024 British Association for Chinese Studies Best Doctoral Thesis Award’ for the best PhD thesis completed at a British university in 2023.

Bryant, Kristy 

*China's Gaze Towards the West: Anti-Baizuo Discourse and Digital Nationalism During the COVID-19 Pandemic*


University of Oxford, United Kingdom, December 2024


Supervisor: Anna Lora-Wainwright

**Keywords:** baizuo, Western liberalism, COVID-19, pandemic, Chinese nationalism, digital nationalism, discourse, netizen, Self-Other

**Abstract:**

With the rise in cross-border news consumption on social media in China, internet users have become increasingly exposed to current affairs in the West. With this exposure, Chinese netizens are increasingly engaged with, and able to construct their own opinions about, current affairs. Amid the ongoing tensions between China and the United States in particular, social media research provides a unique insight into grassroots perspectives and popular sentiments that differ from the more widely studied top-down discourses. In light of such advances, this thesis develops an understanding of how Chinese netizens utilise, engage with, and perceive the liberal West vis-à-vis the popular neologism, “baizuo” (白左). The term, meaning “white left”, serves as a derogatory neologism that encapsulates both racial and political dimensions and is used to criticise Western liberals or “lefties” who align with left-leaning, politically correct, or “woke” perspectives. Through conducting discourse analysis of over 330 Weibo posts containing the term, this study delves into the intricacies of anti-baizuo discourse by tracing the term’s development during the COVID-19 pandemic, exploring its racial and cultural connotations, and uncovering its connection to broader Chinese nationalist ideologies. The findings reveal the fluid and context-specific nature of the term and how it serves as a tool for Chinese netizens to express nationalist and anti-Western sentiments, particularly in response to global geopolitical tensions and the pandemic. The study uncovers how “baizuo” is used not only to highlight and critique Western liberalism – underscoring perceived shortcomings in Western responses to global challenges – but also to express deeper frustrations with Western values and to bolster Chinese national pride and unity. By examining how such sentiments are constructed at the grassroots level by netizens, this research aims to further understandings of contemporary Chinese nationalism beyond the assumptions that it is solely state-driven.

Chang, Yao-Cheng 

*From Observation to Tradition: The Multidimensional Roles of Sight and Hearing in Ancient Chinese Argumentation* 

KU Leuven, Belgium, September 2024


Supervisor: Carine Defoort

**Keywords:** Early Chinese Argumentation, Sight and Hearing, Ghosts and Spirits, Immortals, Cultural Interpretation of Sensory Terms

**Abstract:**

This PhD thesis investigates ancient Chinese texts to understand their views on sight and hearing. While modern interpretations often use the lens of empiricism, focusing on knowledge gained through sensory experience, these ancient texts offer a more complex perspective. This thesis revisits ancient Chinese texts beyond modern empirical readings from two major perspectives. First, it focuses on the intricate multiple meanings of sensory terms and the distinctions made with these terms, which serve as a source of inspiration for ancient Chinese arguments. For instance, ‘jian’ (見, seeing) and ‘wen’ (聞, hearing) in texts like the *Mozi* carry multiple meanings, with ‘wen’ signifying both firsthand and secondhand knowledge. This multifunctional nature of sensory terms highlights the interplay between personal observation and knowledge passed down through generations, demonstrating the complex ways ancient Chinese texts used sensory experiences to convey various forms of knowledge. Second, the thesis examines the theme of ‘gui’ (鬼 ghosts), ‘shen’ (神 spirits), and ‘xian’ (仙 immortals), which modern readings typically consider superstition. It explores how these texts discuss sight and hearing in relation to these spiritual beings, revealing a rich debate that blends philosophy, religion, and rhetoric. The research spans different historical periods, from early ghost-spirit culture to the imperial era’s focus on immortality. The study identifies three key themes: (1) ancient Chinese texts use what people see and hear to argue for the existence of spiritual beings. This evidence is used to convince audiences of the reality of ghosts, spirits, and immortals; (2) in several texts, knowledge is formed and classified through a three-stage process: observation (‘seeing’), oral accounts (‘hearing’), and documentation (‘hearing through transmission’). This process starts with direct observation, followed by spreading knowledge through oral traditions, and finally preserving it in written records; (3) rulers utilized the collective sensory experiences of their subjects to make informed decisions. Ordinary people’s observations and reports were seen as extensions of the ruler’s own senses, helping to ensure just governance and moral leadership. This thesis reveals that ancient Chinese texts offer a complex view of sensory perception, distinct from modern empirical interpretations. Instead of focusing on universal knowledge, these texts use ‘seeing’ and ‘hearing’ to develop arguments on specific topics, such as the existence of ghosts, spirits, and immortals, establishing effective governance, and evaluating historical events. Many ancient texts trust secondhand “heard” knowledge more than firsthand “seen” knowledge, while still valuing direct experiences.

Chen, Lu 

*Environmental and Climate Engagement and Disengagement in China: Case studies of State-led Governance and Local Responses* 

Universitetet i Oslo, Norway, June 2024

Supervisor: Mette Halskov Hansen

Co-supervisor: Zhaohui Liu


**Keywords:** environmental anthropology, gender, ecological civilization, disaster, citizenship, water governance, rural China

**Abstract:**

This article-based dissertation explores how people in China respond to environmental and climate challenges, specifically how state-led environmental and disaster governance affects their responses. It is based on seven months of ethnographic fieldwork and follow-up interviews in four villages and one faith-based organisation in East China. It contributes to environmental anthropology and China studies, considering both the prevalent presence of the state in local China and the increasing challenges that people are facing. I develop an analytical framework of engagement in, and disengagement from, state-led environmental and disaster governance to analyse citizens' responses. I introduce 'engagement' and 'disengagement' to examine when, why, and how they participate and not participate in state-led governance, as well as their practices accompanying non-participation. I use the notion of 'state-led environmental and disaster governance' to focus on its direct and indirect impact on people's lives as seen from local actors' experiences. Multiple factors influence the impact of state-led governance, and local responses are shaped in continuous interactions between local practices and the governance.

In four articles, I examine local actors' diverse responses towards and their lived experiences of environmental and climate challenges, ranging from domestic waste, extreme weather and landslide-induced floods to tap-water-related risks. This dissertation concludes that state-led environmental and disaster governance facilitated some actors' engagement, but also led to disengagement responses. In conjunction with disengagement, some actors built solidarity of informal groups and took alternative practices. This research shows how people respond to increasingly pressing environment- and climate-related challenges by engaging in the government's political processes when possible, and retracting to taking actions by themselves when such engagement is not possible.

Chhiv, Laetitia 

*La légende comme instrument d'édification : le personnage de Yi Yin 伊尹 dans les manuscrits chinois du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle av. n. è.* 

[Legend as an Instrument of Edification: The Figure of Yi Yin 伊尹 in the Chinese Manuscripts from the 4th Century BC]

École Pratique des Hautes Études (Université Paris Sciences et Lettres), France, November 2023

Supervisors: Marianne Bujard and Olivier Venture

Keywords: China, Warring States, Chu kingdom, Manuscripts, Philosophy, Yi Yin, Sovereign and minister

Abstract:

This thesis traces the legend that formed around Yi Yin 伊尹, which served as a minister to the first king of the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600-1046 BC). Apart from Shang rulers, he is the only figure to be plainly identified in both oracle bone inscriptions and transmitted texts. Ancient sources related to Yi Yin thus span a period of over a millennium. They also include several Warring States manuscripts (481-221 BC) that were copied in the old Chu state. In the light of these new sources, this study proposes an overall analysis of the legend of Yi Yin. What do the Chu manuscripts reveal about this narrative? How was it used for edification purposes? How can we interpret the contrasts between all the different written accounts? This study is divided into three parts, moving from the general to the specific.

The first part comprises two chapters which constitute a prelude to the rest of the study. It focuses on three topics: the historical and archaeological context surrounding the discovery of Warring States manuscripts, the methodology used to reconstruct these texts written on bamboo slips, and the deciphering of Chu script. I aim to explain the material and technical backgrounds specific to these documents, as well as the issues involved in reading Chu graphs. Drawing on case studies and concrete examples, this synthesis shows that Chinese paleography is a continually evolving discipline. That is why, in the field of Chu manuscripts, several hypotheses regarding text reconstitutions or graph interpretations are likely to coexist.

The two chapters of the second part survey all the sources linked to Yi Yin throughout Chinese antiquity, from the 13th century BC to the 1st century AD. First, an analysis of oracle bone inscriptions unveils that Yi Yin was the recipient of lavish sacrifices. In the Shang pantheon, he occupied a position equivalent to that of the most prominent ancestral spirits and the most powerful nature deities. Next, I explore the transmitted literature, which reflects the development of the legend in four stages, the succession of which coincides with the social and political changes characteristic of each era. Lastly, I present, transcribe, and translate the five Warring States manuscripts that feature Yi Yin as a protagonist, along with two others that mention him.


The third part examines the triple representation of Yi Yin in the manuscripts: as a catalyst of dynastic change, as an expert in the culinary arts, and as an adept of self-cultivation. The excavated texts reveal different roles of Yi Yin, which appear little or not at all in received texts, and which may even seem contradictory. Yi Yin sometimes appears as the teacher of the ruler, sometimes as the hero of a fable, which may belong to an alternative legendary cycle. Therefore, even if the manuscripts do not totally contradict the legend as drawn from transmitted sources, they do enrich it significantly. We can now clearly distinguish, on the one hand, the historical figure of Yi Yin, about whom we know just a few, and on the




other hand, the multifaceted legendary figure, whose portrayal was adapted in many ways in order to convey various political and philosophical ideas.

The conclusion emphasizes that the main contribution of Chu manuscripts lies in their antiquity and in the raw, unaltered form they have come down to us, largely escaping the stylistic and content categories to which we are accustomed through transmitted literature. Such contrasts, some of them quite striking, open new avenues for research off the beaten track of tradition.

This thesis will be published in the “Civilisations d’Asie orientale” series by the “Institut des Civilisations” (Collège de France). Two monographs are under way *Prolegomènes à la lecture des manuscrits de Chu des Royaumes combattants* (Prolegomena to the reading of Chu Warring States Manuscripts) and *La geste de Yi Yin: histoire singulière d’une figure légendaire de la Chine ancienne* (The Saga of Yi Yin: The Unique History of a Legendary Figure of Ancient China).

Cicci, Federica 

*Caring Women: Transnational Activism and Humanitarian Relief Efforts during Wartime China (1937-1945)* 

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia (Italy) and the Chinese Institute at Universität Heidelberg (Germany),  
March 2024

Supervisors: Laura De Giorgi and Joachim Kurtz

**Keywords:** Humanitarianism; Women; War; China; Catholicism

**Abstract:**

How did relief work in a transnational context offer an agency space for Chinese and foreign women during wartime China? This dissertation focuses on the role of women in relief activities during the War of Resistance against Japan and the Second World War in China (1937-1945) from transnational and transcultural perspectives. It investigates the complex ways in which Western and Chinese women together repositioned themselves in the public sphere through charitable, humanitarian, and religious activities in a crucial historical period that witnessed major global and international transformations. Through some significant case studies that involve the Red Cross and the Catholic missionary female orders of the Ingenbohl Sisters from Switzerland and the Italian Canossian Sisters, the research increases the field of foreign and Chinese women's history, enabling a deeper comprehension of the contributions they made in relief work. I examine what global connections provided opportunities for women working in relief activities, and how these efforts tapped into the so-called feminine virtue and merged the virtuous women—self-sacrificing, frugal, generous, caring and helpful—with that of a nurse and a nun.

Ge, Liang 

*In, With, and Through Ambivalence: Subjectivities, Desires and Affects of Chinese ‘Danmei’ Participants in Producing and Consuming Male-male Romances* 

King’s College London, United Kingdom, July 2024

Supervisors: Fran Martin and Heather Inwood

Keywords: boys’ love, danmei, affect, desire, body, Chinese women, queer, subjectivity, digital media, affective economy

Abstract:

This thesis employs questionnaires and in-depth interviews with Chinese danmei writers and readers to delve into their embodied lived experiences in the dynamic yet ambivalent danmei cultural ecology. Danmei fiction, featuring male-male romantic and/or erotic relationships, emerged in mainland China in the late 1990s. In its early years, danmei culture was heavily influenced by Japanese boys’ love (BL) comics, with pirated copies making their way into mainland China through Taiwan and Hong Kong. Since the 2010s, however, Chinese danmei culture has developed its own ecology and evolved into an ever-expanding transmedia cultural landscape, including fiction, animations, comics, audio dramas, web series, films, games, and music. Danmei has also become the preferred term among its participants. However, because of danmei’s explicit association with male homoeroticism and women and queer participants’ transgressive desires, danmei has always been an easy target for Chinese party-state censorship, entrenched in the heteropatriarchal socio-familial system.

The emergent field of danmei studies predominantly grounds its research in media and textual analysis, with an increasing interest in danmei-adapted web series, while limited attention has been directed towards producers and consumers of danmei fiction. Therefore, through adopting an anti-essentialist perspective and approaching the informants’ life-story narratives in an open manner, this research pays close attention to the ambivalences embodied in danmei participants’ lived experiences. The project thus offers a unique analytical approach, grounded in the grammar of ambivalences. This approach centres on psychic and material lived realities that have been infiltrated by heteronormative governance and reads out the complexity of danmei participants’ affective experiences. This research suggests that the grammar of ambivalences offers us the opportunity to engage with these embodied everyday struggles, in the context of a multitude of normativities, and to explore how best to propel and intervene with a queer/feminist transformative momentum.

I begin the thesis by unveiling the diversity and heterogeneity among danmei participants in terms of age, gender and sexuality, despite the fact that the majority of them are from urban, middle-income and one-child families. It is the accommodation of diverse subject positions that shapes the dynamic of the Chinese danmei cultural ecology, which affords ambivalent subjectivities and desires. Through a careful examination of danmei participants as ambivalent desiring subjects and their varied paradigms of ambivalent affective experiences, this research then maps the manifold ambivalences in the Chinese danmei cultural ecology, embedded and embodied in their subjective experience of reading and writing male homoerotic texts. Throughout this research, I neither dodge the multiple (backward-looking) normativities infused within danmei culture, nor do I foreclose the (forward-facing) transformative potential embodied among danmei participants and the dynamic, fluid cultural ecology. By moving beyond a reductionist binary

framework, i.e., resistance versus escapism, of danmei culture, I suggest that ambivalence operates as the core organising principle of its participants as well as its cultural ecology. Furthermore, it is the reflexivity and self-problematizing nature of this cultural community that constantly drive danmei's self-renewal and dynamics, enabling this cultural form to gain its queer feminist momentum.

The monograph adapted from this doctoral thesis has now been under contract with University of Michigan Press.

Georges-Picot, Jean-Baptiste 

*Places Made of Images: The Domestic Shrines of Minyak*

Ecole Pratiques des Hautes Etudes (EPHE) / Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS),  
France, September 2024


Supervisors: Charles Ramble and Pierre-Olivier Dittmar

Keywords: Tibet, Art History, Buddhism

Abstract:

Focusing on six painted shrines from Minyak – a region in the easternmost fringes of Tibet – this dissertation follows two directions. First, it introduces, contextualises and describes a unique corpus, the study of which is of primary importance due to its state of disrepair. This discussion serves as the base material to tackle the visual environment of Tibetan houses. Second, it attempts to interpret these shrines’ overwhelming décor. This investigation scrutinises the content of paintings, together with their formal characteristics and the way both are entangled into a constellation of images, acts, places and objects. Based on this specific case, this inquiry moves on to address the way art history usually engages with Tibetan images. In particular, it focuses on the questions of legibility and “iconographic mistakes”, the relation between places and images, and the design of painted ensembles.

Han, Dong

*Picturing the New Knowledge of Heaven and Earth: World Maps, Cosmologies and Visual Culture in Matteo Ricci's China Mission* 

University of Warwick, UK, May 2024

Supervisors: Louise Bourdua and Lorenzo Pericolo

Keywords: Jesuits, Cartography, World Map, Visual Culture, Global Early Modernity


Abstract:

This thesis examines the Chinese world maps produced by Matteo Ricci (1552 – 1610) during his mission to Ming China from 1583 to 1608. Previous scholars have made significant contributions to this field. However, the particular role of Ricci's maps as a visual device in the conversation of two worldview systems between China and Europe still requires further examination. This thesis will probe into this issue in five chapters.

Chapter 1 discusses Ricci's life and self-fashioning during his China mission. I demonstrate his culturally hybrid status as an 'outsider' and an 'insider' in the Ming Empire and his dual identity as a missionary and a scholar. Chapter 2 is a comprehensive survey of Ricci mapmaking from Zhaoqing 肇慶 to Beijing 北京, in which I pay particular attention to the world map Kunyu wanguo quantu 坤輿萬國全圖 made in Beijing in 1602. Chapter 3 takes the 1602 map as an example to analyse the European and Chinese sources of Ricci's mapmaking, in order to probe how Ricci constructed the culturally hybrid knowledge of heaven and earth in his world maps. Chapter 4 is a case study of the 1602 map from the perspective of spectatorship, exploring the cultural significance and religious meaning of this cartographic masterpiece as a printed geographical treatise and a pingfeng (folding screen) in the study of Ming literati. Chapter 5 investigates Ricci's mapmaking after 1602, where I examine the religious symbolism of the 1603 map and the decorative illustrations on the 1608 map.

Overall, this thesis reveals how Ricci's self-fashioning and mapmaking interacted with Chinese literati's understanding of the world within the sociocultural context of late-Ming China from the interdisciplinary perspective of histories of art, science and ideas.

Huang, Ke 

*Sociologie de la plateforme de livraison Meituan et de ses livreurs. Redéploiement du capitalisme chinois, acteurs et régulation* 

Sociology of Meituan Platform and Its Delivery Workers. Redeployment of Chinese Capitalism, Actors and Regulation

Université Paris Cité/Inalco, France, July 2024

Supervisors: Patrick Cingolani and Chloé Froissart

Keywords: Work platform, Capitalism, Delivery workers, Meituan, Control, Collective action, Regulation, Trade union

Abstract:

This dissertation stems from the observation that since the 2010s, the platform economy has been developing in China, emerging as one of the key economic drivers in the era of slowing economic growth known as the “New Normal” (xin changtai). How does the platform economy, as a new form of capitalism, operate within the Chinese regime known as the “socialist market economy” (shehui zhuyi shichang jingji)? Sitting at the intersection of perspectives from sociology of work and political sociology, alongside an economic approach rooted in regulation theory, this dissertation focuses on delivery platforms to examine the deployment of Chinese platform capitalism and the practices of regulation actors.

In addition to the rich literature of platform studies, this dissertation mobilises numerous policy documents and reports related to the platform economy. Ethnographic data for this study come from participant observations and interviews conducted through fieldwork in three Chinese cities (Xiamen, Shenzhen, Guangzhou) and textual and audio-visual materials collected via online ethnography.


Based on the case study of the Meituan platform, this dissertation first reveals that the platform constructs a multiple outsourcing system that gives rise to a specific “grey zone” of employment. Through their own strategies for controlling delivery workers, Chinese food delivery platforms are developing a form of platform capitalism that differs from that inspired by the North American model. Firstly, algorithmic control constructs a digital Panopticon by combining it with a punishment system designed to instil fear into delivery workers in the work process. Secondly, for organisational control, Chinese platforms cooperate with third-party companies to create the “station” (zhandian) model, providing paternalistic protection through human intermediaries. The platforms then integrate the delivery workers recruited and managed by the third-party company (zhuansong) into the power relations and form a de facto subordination relationship between themselves and the zhuansong workers. For the freer delivery workers (zhongbao) who register via the App on their smartphones, platforms gamify their work by creating different modes of work, where the zhongbao workers’ freedom is transformed into a choice between a limited number of options.

Faced with the exploitation of workers by platforms and the disruptive effects on Chinese society as this economy expands, various actors are reacting against Chinese-style platform capitalism. On the one hand, Chinese delivery workers are demonstrating their agency by expressing their dissatisfaction. Their collective actions in the internet space indicate the possibility of using new technologies to build a new form of solidarity beyond the community of workers in China, where the space for resistance is shrinking. On the other hand, the Chinese authorities (central and local governments, as well as trade unions) tend to regulate

platforms to eliminate their negative effects and protect the interests of delivery workers without changing the country's existing institutional systems.



Launay, Elise

*“Xianzheng”, un constitutionalisme à la chinoise?* 

[Xianzheng: Chinese-style Constitutionalism?]

Institut national des langues et civilisations étrangères (Inalco), France, December 2023

Supervisors: Frédéric Wang and Sébastien Billioud

Keywords: Constitutionalism, belief system, yifa zhiguo, rule of law, Chinese theory

Abstract:

Viewed through a liberal lens, the Western concept of constitutionalism does not fit well in an authoritarian one-Party regime such as China, since its core philosophy lies in the prevention from excessive concentration of power and is often associated with certain democratic norms: not only separation of powers but civil society, free elections, and rule of law, amount to the criteria of a genuine constitutionalist state. We argue that despite much reluctance to use the term “xianzheng” on the part of the CCP leaders (as a politically-loaded term inseparable from the connotation of the liberal democratic systems of government), its ideologists actually display a constitutionalist theory, in the narrow sense. There is not much of a paradox if one analyzes the Chinese Party-State’s ideology as a specific belief system making sense within its own set of principles, codes and values. Under the name “fazhi guojia”, the official discourse promotes a triptych, articulating the claim of the CCP leadership necessity to the national sovereignty premise (people as masters of the country) and to the “yifa zhiguo” assertion, whereby those in power and all citizens alike obey law for the purpose of the “Chinese dream”.

Leggieri, Antonio

*Clap your hands and rid yourself of dust: an analysis of the late-Ming text Guzhang Juechen*

鼓掌絕塵 

Universität Wien, Università del Salento, Austria, Italy, October 2024

Supervisors: Maurizio Paolillo and Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik

Keywords: Guzhang Juechen, Late-Ming, Huaben


Abstract:

Guzhang juechen 鼓掌絕塵 (Clap your hands and rid yourself of dust, hereafter GZJC) is a collection of four medium-length stories, first published during the Ming 明 dynasty (1368–1644). Each story unfolds over 10 hui 回 (chapters), giving the text a total length of 40 chapters. Its foreword pins down rather precisely the era in which it was finished (and probably started circulating): it bears the date Chongzhen Xinweisui zhi Yuandan 崇禎辛未歲之元旦 (First Day of the Xinwei Year of the Chongzhen Era, therefore 1631). Respecting the praxis of writers of that time, its author and compiler conceal their identities behind artsy, bombastic pseudonyms. The text is signed by one Gu Wu Jinmu Sanren 古吳金木散人 (Idle man of metal and wood from Old Wu), and, apart from him, more people seem to have collaborated in the book. The names of Bihu Xiansheng 閉戶先生 (Master of the closed house) and Chicheng Linhai Yisou 赤城臨海逸叟 (Old Man at leisure close to the sea from Chicheng) appear in the introductions.

The four ten-chapter stories or sections are named respectively, Feng 風 (Wind), Hua 花 (Flowers), Xue 雪 (Snow) and Yue 月 (Moon), and each tells a different story, although some recurring macro-themes can be traced throughout the work. This study tackles GZJC in four different macro-aspects: the first chapter is an analysis and an introduction of the text and of its elements. The most evident aspects are the presence of diluted plots and the appearance of lists.

The second chapter deals with paratextual features and then it attempts a narratological analysis which is meant to establish the figure of the narrator as doer of things.

The third chapter is a study of intertextual references, mostly from three points of view: poems, references to famous literary characters, and themes. It also includes an analysis of the Chinese way to intertextuality. The fourth chapter deals with humour. It starts from an analysis of a satirical episode, and then proceeds to tackle humour on a micro-level and on a macro-level. This chapter highlights also the constant dialogue that the text has with the past.

Leonard, Gordon 

*Chinese born-global firms in a megacity: a social capital perspective* 

Nottingham Trent University, UK, May 2023

Supervisor: Amon Simba

**Keywords:** International Entrepreneurship, Born-global Firms, Social Capital, Legitimacy

**Abstract:**

This research responds to the recent call in the entrepreneurship literature to address the shortcomings arising from the application of management theories developed in the “West” to “non-Western” contexts. The International Entrepreneurship (IE) literature itself strongly suggests social capital generation is important for born global firms’ survival and growth, though understanding of how this is conducted in non-Western contexts is weak. Drawing upon and extending the social capital and legitimacy literature, this study utilises survey and in-depth interview data to further contextual knowledge about how born global firms go about generating their social capital in a booming city in south-west China, Chengdu. Born global firms have not been widely studied beyond the more developed coastal areas of PR China and with economic growth shifting towards rapidly growing interior cities such as Chengdu, this research provides new avenues to understand how born global firms can establish themselves in such different environments.

This study specifically seeks to understand how do Chengdu based born global firms earn and maintain legitimacy to establish contact with high-prestige networked individuals under different socio-cultural conditions. In doing so, this research furthers the understanding of born global firms’ social capital generating behaviour outside of the more studied developed regions of China or the West. These studies have not focussed on the role of legitimacy in social capital building, which is suggested to be more relevant in regions or cities which are experiencing very rapid periods of change and economic disruption. These changes require born global firms to regularly renew their legitimacy due to the rapid disruptive pace of change.

Using a sequential explanatory design, this research collected fifty-two valid responses from owner-managers of Chengdu based born global firms. To follow up on emergent findings, eight in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to provide rich data on the linkages between the two most relevant dimensions of social capital (relational and cognitive) and legitimacy (cognitive and socio-political).

The findings of this research revealed that not only were strong ties vital during born global firms’ early efforts at social capital building, but an interesting finding also revealed from the qualitative rich data was the subsequent role officials and high prestige occupation holders played as these firms sought to expand their networks. Officials often served as key sponsors who facilitated access to high-prestige individuals and additional scarce resources, which would hitherto remain hidden.

A conceptual typology of four firm types has been proposed based on cross-case analysis of findings to demonstrate the dynamic linkages between the levels of socio-political legitimacy achieved and connections to prestigious occupation holders. This typology can be used by practitioner or academic audiences to strategically plan or understand and develop purposive social capital building strategies for born global firms. Details of an illegitimate type are also provided, illustrating where born global firms survivability could be imperilled if such strategies are ignored or neglected. This research may also be of interest to

policy makers or organisations tasked with supporting born global firms such as chambers of commerce, and innovation/enterprise zones.

Lepri, Chiara 

*Il cinema cinese della “melodia principale”. Storia, istituti, linguaggi e narrazioni* 

[Chinese main-melody cinema. History, institutions, languages and narrations]

Sapienza University of Rome, Italy, September 2024


Supervisor: Federico Masini


Keywords: Chinese cinema, media, propaganda, main melody, storytelling

Abstract:

This thesis is dedicated to the study of Chinese propaganda cinema, with particular reference to the so-called “main-melody cinema” (zhuxuanlü dianying 主旋律电影), a category established in 1987 to maintain the propagandistic tradition of cinema in the People’s Republic of China. Since the 2000s, main-melody cinema has become one of the most commercially successful genres in the Chinese film industry. The “main melody” is analysed here in two sections, both of which draw upon Chinese Media Studies and Chinese Film Studies.

The first section adopts a historical approach and presents a diachronic account of the institutions that have controlled, regulated, and supported propaganda film production from the late 19th century to 2022. The second section focuses on the narratological and linguistic analysis of “main-melody cinema” (1987-2022). To this end, a periodisation of the transformations in main-melody cinema is proposed, combined with a series of case studies. The four time periods and the selected films highlight the linear transformation of the main-melody genre, thus identifying changes in the narrative elements of contemporary Chinese propaganda storytelling.

Lian, Ziyu 

*Precarious Intersections: An Ethnographic Study of the Work, Lives, and Everyday Ethics of Industrial Workers in a Chinese State Railway Company* 

Durham University, United Kingdom, April 2024

Supervisors: Catherine Alexander and Thomas Yarrow


Keywords: Precarity, Ethics, Labour

Abstract:

This dissertation explores Chinese industrial workers' labour, lives, and everyday ethics in the context of growing labour precarity. My ethnography, based on a year's fieldwork at a Chinese state railway company's construction site and its headquarters, demonstrates how new forms of precarity profoundly affect all aspects of workers' lives, including romantic relationships, marriage, social relationships with co-workers, plus a sense of security, and changing ideas of achievement.

I propose a fourfold model in which labour precarity intensifies social, affective, and structural precarity. Thus, since the reform of state-owned enterprises in the 1990s, temporary employment has largely replaced socialist, lifelong employment. Structural precarity refers to precarity resulting from particular economic and political configurations. Social precarity is characterised by vulnerable social relationships. Affective precarity indicates subjective experiences of precarity, such as the emotions that emerge in the context of labour, structural, and social precarity. The extent to which workers are affected by these different forms of precarity, or able to mitigate them, largely depends on their positions in a complex, gendered labour hierarchy of permanent state employees, temporary agency workers, workers with oral agreements with the company, interns, apprentices, and migrant workers. Exegeses and experiences of these kinds of precarity are shaped by distinct moral frameworks: Confucian philosophy emphasising filial obligation, socialist ideas of collective worth, and recent ideas of self-improvement and individual advancement. Drawing on all these three frameworks, workers piece together solutions to moral dilemmas, building a patchwork of everyday ethics, which I term the ethics of precarity.

My contributions are threefold. First, I offer new insights to scholarship on precarity by exploring how different forms of precarity intersect and are experienced. Second, I provide a novel analysis of how everyday ethics and precarity are intertwined. Finally, I provide an original ethnography of Chinese railway workers' labour and lives.

Liu, Jialong 

*The Tones of Stones: Public Inscriptions and the Rise of Regional Powers in Tang China (755-907)* 

KU Leuven, Belgium, May 2024


Supervisor: Hilde De Weerd

Keywords: Tang China, Inscriptions, Provinces, Court, Legitimacy

Abstract:

This dissertation studies the role of public inscriptions in the mid-late Tang (755-907) political context. The Chinese Tang Empire suffered a continuing crisis after the An Lushan Rebellion (755-763). On the one hand, control from the central government based in the capitals over the whole empire weakened. On the other hand, the powers of provincial governors increased in reaction. The tension between the central and local governments was one of the most significant problems that beset the empire throughout the latter half of the dynasty. Under this background, public inscriptions as remarkable landmarks in local areas were used by the court, local governments, and literati involved to fulfill propaganda purposes. The first two chapters focus on a specific genre of public inscriptions: steles of virtuous governance. One chapter studies the steles of virtuous governance in a semi-autonomous province, demonstrating that the provincial governors used the steles to gain legitimacy in ruling the province and maintain their rulership during crises. The other chapter studies the steles in a province whose governors were appointed by the court and loyal to the emperor. This chapter shows that the inscriptions were structured based on the dynamic political situation to achieve good propaganda results. The following two chapters focus on another genre of public inscriptions: records on walls of office halls. I argue that the authors of the records on the walls of local government offices attempted to emphasize the authority of the central court and neglect provincial governors' rising powers in their texts. In this way, the literati were trying to define the relationship between the central court and provincial governments. In the last chapter, I analyze the spatiotemporal distribution of the public inscriptions throughout the Tang Dynasty (618-907). I conclude that the Tang capitals gradually lost their dominant position in the cultural field and the cultural importance of Southern China increased.

Liu, Ruoxi 

*The Meaning of Being Independent: Precarities of Work and Lifestyles and Alternative-Seeking among Chinese Self-Employed Cultural Workers* 

Department of Sociology, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, November 2023

Supervisor: Christel Lane

**Keywords:** Alternative-seeking, China, Communities, Cultural Workers, Independent Work, Precarity, Self-Employment

**Abstract:**

Notwithstanding the many emerging terms relevant to self-employed/independent workers, such as freelancers and flexible workers, and the growing discussion regarding new types of work and entrepreneurship, self-employed workers are still a minority in the Chinese labour market. Without an official definition and uniform categorisation, self-employed workers in Chinese society face an ambivalent situation in economic, social, and cultural terms. This thesis investigates the independent cultural workers, who constitute a significant population to study among the self-employed workers. They represent an important niche social group whose work ideally requires a high level of autonomy and creativity but who constantly face constraints from content regulation and censorship. Compared to other self-employed workers (such as gig workers and non-cultural digital workers) or those in other social contexts, independent cultural workers in China face challenges connected with being ‘independent’ in various aspects of sociality, culture, and gender.

Contextualised in contemporary mainland China, a post-socialist society characterised by its own features of collectivism, individualisation, and neoliberal tendencies, this thesis studies the ‘independents’ who do cultural work to understand three sets of research themes from a sociological perspective: first, precarity and hope in independent cultural workers’ work and lifestyles; second, the politics of cultural production; and third, the individual-society-state relationship. The thesis adopts a mixture of qualitative methodologies (participant observation, in-depth interview, and solicited diary-keeping) throughout an 11-month period (from May 2020 to April 2021) of ethnographic fieldwork across a number of Chinese cities.


Drawing on the testimonies of 111 interviewees, 16 diaries, and my own fieldnotes as a participant observer and engaging with the literature on precarity and hope in creative labour studies, the politics of cultural production, and individualism and individualisation, I first summarise their work and lifestyle practices, characterised by various precarities, not only in the normal sense as an aspect of work, but also from social, cultural, and gendered standpoints. I then investigate how they strive for self-realisation in part via negotiation at both individual and community levels, in response to the growing interest from the market and the state in self-employment. Last, I highlight their search for alternatives to various kinds of precarity and the increasing uncertainties created by the multiple players within China’s cultural politics. In particular, I identify their alternative practices in developing new modes of doing cultural work via self-organisation, cultivating alternative spaces, communities, and cultures, and pursuing a new, often non-confrontational cultural politics through everydayness and mobility-seeking.


By pursuing three lines of enquiry, this research contributes to an understanding of the meaning of ‘being independent’ in an authoritarian society with residual collectivist, as well as neoliberal, tendencies. I argue that ‘being independent’ in China starts with aspects of work but goes beyond it to also encompass cultural,



social, and political aspects of life. I conclude by establishing workers' reasons for being independent, which lie in achieving self-realisation, social withdrawal, and individualism, and the approaches to being independent, including disengagement from society and alternative-seeking. I finally position independent cultural workers as a drifting social group and reflect on the features of heterogeneity, in-betweenness, and temporality, shown in their work and lifestyle practices and status of being independent.

Overall, this thesis furthers a more nuanced understanding of cultural/creative work, cultural/creative workers, and their communities; develops new insights into the individual-society-state relationship and contest individual agency at the grassroots levels in China; and provides a 'cultural independents'-focused version of China's individualisation process.

Liu, Shuang 

*Vulnerable Yet Resilient: Representations of Migrant Workers in Contemporary Chinese Prose* 

Leiden University Institute for Area Studies, Netherlands, December 2024

Supervisors: Maghiel van Crevel and Svetlana Kharchenkova.


Keywords: Chinese literature, migrant workers, vulnerable, resilient

Abstract:

China has been known as the “workshop of the world” since the late 20th century, and countless consumers all over the world have been purchasing and using products “made in China” for decades. But what do they know about the people who made these products? Along with construction workers, the makers of goods made in China constitute a core group within the nearly 300 million internal rural-to-urban labor migrants whose cheap labor has enabled China’s economic rise amid a globalized ecology of consumption. Even as their labor enters the lives of others worldwide, they essentially remain strangers to the average store customer. Who are these people?

This study asks how China’s migrant workers are represented in literature, as distinct from various other discourses. Addressing this question will give us a better understanding of China’s internal migrant workers, Chinese society, global capitalism – and last but not least, of Chinese literature.

Luo, Yuxue

*Contextualising Foreign Subsidiary Governance of EMNEs: Antecedents and Consequences* 

University of Nottingham Ningbo China, China, November 2024

Supervisors: Lei Li and Youngun Kim

Keywords: foreign subsidiary governance, board of directors, CEO, antecedents, consequences

Abstract:

The institutional environments for international business have become increasingly complex and uncertain, which presents disproportionate challenges to emerging-market multinational enterprises (EMNEs). Foreign subsidiaries of EMNEs are expected to establish well-functioning governance structures and play crucial roles in managing the global strategy journey of parent companies. However, the literature reveals a gap in systematic research on foreign subsidiary governance. To address the research gap, I develop a comprehensive framework to explore (1) the understudied internal drivers of foreign subsidiary governance structure such as the FDI motives, business relatedness, and the parent firm's ownership; (2) the lack of understanding of the impact of foreign subsidiary governance structure on local legitimacy of EMNEs. To empirically test the hypotheses, I utilise data from 116 listed foreign subsidiaries of Chinese MNEs, collected from CSMAR, ORBIS, BoardEx, and ProQuest, spanning from 2005 to 2021.


Subsidiary governance mainly serves an internal role in managing relationships with headquarters and an external role in managing relationships with host countries. Conflicts may arise due to this dual role, leading to a trade-off or varying emphasis between headquarters control/standardisation and subsidiary autonomy/adaptation (Kostova & Roth, 2002).

The first empirical study examines the impact of antecedents. The findings indicate that the strategic asset-seeking motive positively influences the external role of the subsidiary board while negatively affecting its internal role. This impact is demonstrated by a greater emphasis on engaging with the host country environment, evidenced by a higher proportion of independent directors and a preference for non-expatriate CEOs. Conversely, the internal role receives less emphasis, as reflected in a lower ratio of expatriate directors. In comparison, institutional escape, business relatedness, and headquarters ownership of subsidiaries correlate more strongly with the subsidiary board's internal role and less with its external role. The hypotheses regarding institutional escape—that it correlates with a higher expatriate director ratio, lower independent director ratio, and a higher likelihood of hiring a non-expatriate CEO—are supported. However, hypotheses concerning business relatedness and headquarters ownership receive only partial support. The second empirical study investigates the influence of subsidiary governance on legitimacy. Utilising sentiment analysis of news titles and two-stage least squares regressions (2SLS), the study reveals that a greater external role and lesser internal role positively correlate with subsidiary legitimacy. Specifically, a higher ratio of independent directors, the appointment of non-expatriate CEOs, and a lower ratio of expatriate directors facilitate legitimacy attainment.

Additionally, the moderating effect of cultural distance is discussed across both empirical studies. Generally, increasing cultural distance strengthens the internal role while weakening the external role. Both empirical chapters employ regression analyses, followed by a series of robustness tests, which generally confirm the robustness of the results.

I contribute significantly to international corporate governance and the study of EMNEs. It addresses gaps highlighted by Puck & Filatotchev (2020) by integrating multi-disciplinary approaches in corporate governance and strategic management in the process of firm internationalisation. Moreover, the thesis integrates and extends management theories within the context of foreign subsidiaries, which are essential elements of MNEs navigating dual pressures from both home and host environments. Moreover, it shifts the focus from previous research on DMNEs to include EMNEs, which uniquely impact subsidiary board composition and CEO recruitment and are supplementary to existing literature. Additionally, I empirically examine the impact of board composition on legitimacy, a novel contribution not previously directly tested in the literature. Finally, it provides implications for both practitioners and researchers, highlighting the importance of strategically selecting board members and CEOs for subsidiaries to align their expertise and strategic vision with local contextual dynamics and subsidiary-specific objectives.

Ma, Yinting

*Le développement de la France libre en Chine: les relations sino-françaises pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1940-1946)* 

[The development of the Free France in China: Sino-French relations during the Second World War (1940-1946)]

Université Paris-Saclay, ENS Paris-Saclay, France, September 2024

Supervisor: Olivier Wiewiorka

Keywords: Free France, General de Gaulle, Tchang Kaï-chek, Sino-French relations, Second World War

Abstract:

By tracing the history of diplomatic relations between Free France and Tchang Kaï-chek's government during the Second World War, this thesis endeavors to integrate the development of Free France in the Far East into the study of Sino-French relations. After the collapse of France in the summer of 1940, the Gaullist movement in China underwent a gradual transformation. The movement evolved from the spontaneous organization of French expatriates in China to the appointment of an official delegate by General de Gaulle to establish relations with Tchang Kaï-chek's government. Between 1941 and 1945, General de Gaulle's diplomatic efforts towards China reflected his political vision and concern for French interests in China and Indochina. However, the difficulties encountered by the Gaullists in China revealed the intrinsic fragility of Free France, notably its lack of resources and internal contradictions (between Gaullists and Giraudists). As members of the Allied coalition, Tchang Kaï-chek and de Gaulle shared both contradictions and common interests regarding Indochina. Moreover, the ambition of the Free French to restore French influence in China after the war, as well as Tchang Kaï-chek's desire to strengthen his friendly relations with France in order to create a favorable international environment for his government, were decisive factors in the evolution of their relationship during the dark years.

Morbiato, Anna

*Word order and sentence structure in Mandarin Chinese: new perspectives* 

Ca'Foscari University (co-supervised by the University of Sydney, Dept. of Linguistics, Australia), Italy, March 2018


Supervisors: Magda Abbiati (Ca' Foscari University of Venice) and William A. Foley (The University of Sydney)

**Keywords:** Word order, subjecthood, constituenthood, argument structure, event structure, information structure

**Abstract:**

Word order (WO) is one of the most fascinating and investigated topics in Mandarin Chinese (MC) linguistics, and many accounts have been proposed on different WO patterns and constructions. However, despite the large amount of research, a number of WO related issues remain rather controversial. Crucially, no unified consensus exists on the relationship between WO and the different dimensions of the language (i.e. semantics, syntax and pragmatics), and on how these levels interact with each other. The present thesis's aim is twofold: (1) identify the categories that are useful to account for WO patterns and variations in MC; (2) examine in greater depth the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic factors that influence word order in MC, as well as how they interact and impose constraints on possible WO variations. The novelty of the approach lies on three aspects: (i) a typological, comparative perspective that benefits from cross-linguistic investigation of WO phenomena in other languages; (ii) a bottom up approach that avails itself of cross-linguistically validated typological tools (e.g., GR tests, or constituenthood tests) aimed at conducting the analysis on a language-internal basis, and (iii) an empirical approach: the analysis avails itself of natural linguistic data, mainly drawn from corpora, and relies on acceptability checks with native speakers. Overall, the thesis highlights that WO patterns and constructions are determined by the interplay of different factors and constraints. It also highlights that, for the sake of clarity and ambiguity avoidance, WO constraints are hierarchically organized, and WO freezing phenomena occur to allow disambiguation of participants in the described event.

Nagy, Mercédesz

*Az Új Kína kulturális percepciója Magyarországon* 

[The cultural perception of “New China” in Hungary]

DOI:10.15476/ELTE.2023.322

Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences, Hungary, April 2024

Supervisors: Akos Bertalan Apatoczky and Ferenc Hammer

Keywords: Chinese-Hungarian cultural relations; perception of China in Hungary; Rákosi regime; visual propaganda

Abstract:

This dissertation aims to contribute to the research and understanding of the cultural relationship between China and Hungary. Its focus is on the short period after 1949, the proclamation of the People’s Republic of China, when Hungary’s thinking about China changed along the lines of the transition between the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War. What used to be an ‘exotic far-off world’ suddenly and dramatically became a direct political ally: ‘People’s China’ became a ‘friendly country’. This fact did not mean, of course, that the Hungarian public could have had a more credible picture of this country (and geopolitical factor) with a radically different cultural, religious and social tradition, which still calls itself the Middle Kingdom, than the one that had been formed in the Horthy regime’s perception of the East, mixed with the Turanism and disappointed yearning after Trianon. The perception of China in Hungary that unfolded under the dictatorship of the Rákosi regime was shaped by the historical and geopolitical dramaturgy of the period, in accordance with the narrative defined in the Soviet Union - which was fed by the spirit of internationalism that was taking on an imperialist tone over time - and was adapted to the Soviet-Chinese relationship. The Sino-Soviet struggle for dominance that began after Stalin’s death was reflected in the Hungarian image of China, always with a slight phase lag; as a result of the deteriorating relations between the great powers, the Kádár regime’s later forced and unquestioning stance in favour of the Soviet Union was also felt in Chinese cultural relations and in the cultural perception of China. In this respect, the dissertation examines the cultural documentation of the period’s perception of China. For this purpose, it mainly focuses on the phenomena created by visual propaganda - with a focus on the slide films of the 1950s and the 1951 exhibition New China at the Museum of Fine Arts - and their press.

Ng, Chloe Cheug-Wing

*War and the Representations of Women in the Twelfth-Century China*

University of Oxford, UK, July 2024

Supervisor: Tian Yuan Tan

**Keywords:** Chinese literature, Chinese history, gender history, women's literature, war studies, Song dynasty, Middle-Period China

**Abstract:**

The dissertation focuses on examining female images of the period 1100–1200, analysing how they were produced and used in the context of national instability and investigating how the interpretation and production of such images were affected and/or shaped by war directly and indirectly.

A significant volume of previous scholarship has discussed different aspects of women's roles and rights that might have an impact on, or even started, many of the gender-related cultural phenomena in late imperial China. However, discussions on the impact of wars on women's lives in the Song dynasty have only started in the last two decades. The Northern Song dynasty was bitterly defeated by the Jin army in an unexpectedly swift manner in 1127. Losing half of its lands to the Jin army triggered a major population shift; having almost the entire imperial family, including the two emperors, Huizong and Qinzong, captured by the north, the Song court somehow managed to survive and ruled for another 150-odd years. As a result of the war, China saw huge social and political changes at the time. For this reason, the dissertation focuses on this period, 1100–1200.

By studying the female images under the context of national insecurities and rediscovering the hidden images of women in the war narratives, I hope to see how women at the time were impacted by national instability, fill the gaps of related studies and discussions, and offer a perspective that could lead to a further understanding of the lives of women at the time.



Ooi, Yen 

*Sino Science Fiction and Zoefuturism*

Royal Holloway, University of London, United Kingdom, July 2024

Supervisor: Adam Roberts

**Keywords:** Sino science fiction, zoefuturism, techno-Orientalism, decolonialism, colonialism, postcolonialism, zoetology

**Abstract:**

The aim of this thesis is to define the characteristics of Sino science fiction through understanding its grounding in ancient East Asian knowledge systems and philosophy, and its emergence through modern cultural and socio-political developments. This will facilitate locating my novel *Rimba* within the genre, to critically contextualise its themes and concerns contemporarily. Often, Sino and Sinophone studies are synonymous with Chinese studies, which is problematic in the oversimplification of the community, where the pressure to focus only on mainland Chinese trends and their consequences have distracted researchers from the wider global Sino community. Using just texts that are available in English, either translated from Chinese or written in English by Chinese-speaking writers or writers with Chinese heritage, this research aims to keep its focus on literature that has been accepted into the pool of mainstream science fiction by the general readership, while presenting additional values to the global Sino readership. Beginning with situating Chinese science fiction and Chinese diaspora science fiction within the wider genre, I will show that science fiction is a congruence site for writers from China and the wider diaspora, and how a duality of science fictional and cultural traits can be expected from their works. Then, I will define the characteristics of the Sino community to reveal how a Sino rationality is required to unlock a Sino reading of the science fiction, and verifying Sino science fiction as diaspora literature. While this isn't essential for the general understanding or enjoyment of the literature, this is still significant because it provides a new critical examination of Sino science fiction that does not rely on foundational theory that clashes with its fundamentality; instead, it informs a new way of approaching Sino science fiction that better caters to embracing all the meanings that it can proffer. Finally, I will introduce zoefuturism as a broader genre within which Sino science fiction is a part, outlining its general concept and how it will form the next phase of my personal research and writing, post-PhD.

Ormaghi, Valentina 

*La mediazione linguistico-culturale nella didattica del cinese: modelli teorici e applicazioni pedagogiche*



[Linguistic and cultural mediation in Chinese language teaching: theoretical models and pedagogical applications]

Sapienza Università di Roma, Italia, July 2023

Supervisor: Chiara Romagnoli

Keywords: Chinese language teaching, Domain-specific Chinese, Linguistic and Cultural Mediation, Mediators' training

Abstract:

This dissertation aims at exploring a topic which has gained growing popularity as far as European languages are concerned, but which is still rarely analyzed when it comes to Chinese language, that is, the teaching of mediation skills. Due to the ever increasing migration trends and globalization, linguistic and cultural mediation is playing a crucial role in the functioning of modern societies. Mediators are playing an increasingly important role in Italy, and Bachelor and Master's degree programs in Linguistic and Cultural Mediation are flourishing. As far as Europe is concerned, in 2018 the Companion Volume of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has introduced important guidelines for teaching and evaluating mediation skills and strategies. However, in Italy, in spite of the increasing importance of linguistic and cultural mediation, there is not a univocal definition of the identity and roles of mediators and there are no definite guidelines as far as training is concerned. For these reasons, this dissertation proposes some teaching materials and activities aimed at university students attending Chinese language courses within the Faculties of Linguistic and Cultural Mediation in Italy, with the purpose of training students' mediation skills.

The first two chapters are aimed at giving a theoretical framework: the first chapter gives a definition of the term mediation and defines the profile and role of linguistic and cultural mediators, while the second chapter illustrates the different types of training proposals emerged from the literature review. The third chapter puts forth a proposal of teaching materials aimed at training students' mediation skills as well as developing their knowledge of the specific terminology, with a focus on legal Chinese. The chapter also includes some suggestions on how to use online and multimedia tools. As final, the fourth chapter presents the results of a laboratory, which was carried out with the aim of testing the teaching materials proposed.

Pan, Fuqin 

*Learning to Read in Suzhou: Libraries, Cultural Capital, and Inequalities in Suzhou's Preschool Children's Emergent Reading* 

University of Liverpool, United Kingdom, May 2024

Supervisors: David Goodman, Nicole Talmacs and Josie Billington

**Keywords:** children's libraries, home reading environment, cultural capital, educational inequality


**Abstract:**

Since the launch of the national reading campaign in 2006, children's reading in China has been increasingly promoted by national policy. However, the existing literature on this topic mainly centres on the correlation between school-aged children's reading test performances and their families' socioeconomic status or the impact of educational disadvantages on rural children's literacy development. Little discussed is the uneven start of preschool children's emergent reading in Chinese metropolises mixed with a large influx of rural-to-urban immigrants and non-immigrants. Social inequality arising from the complex demographic composition is partially reflected in children's differences in accessing library resources and home reading experiences. While public libraries claim to embrace all children with free reading services and average urban families declare no significant economic challenges in book purchases, some children still have no access to quality reading resources and foster no regular reading habits. In contrast, private children's libraries have gained impetus from market demand and provide customised reading services to families with 'advantageous' financial and cultural capital, which benefits privileged children with reading-focused support. Even less attention has been given to how families without the means to access library resources perceive and practise their children's emergent reading. Suzhou's disparate possession of cultural capital contributes to preschool children's emergent reading inequalities across the city.

This thesis aims to fill this gap in scholarship by exploring three aspects of how preschool children in Suzhou learn to read: firstly, public libraries; secondly, private libraries that operate through paid membership schemes and guided reading classes; and thirdly, through the study of children from rural-to urban migrant workers' families. Drawing on French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's framework of cultural capital, the study tackles these questions by participant observation in public and private children's libraries as well as children's story times organised by them; analysis of reading environments, business infrastructure and programs offered; and through interview of parents and library staff, for a holistic picture of preschool children's emergent reading life in Suzhou.

For observers of China, this thesis provides considerations for educational inequality in China from the perspective of emergent literacy acquisition. For educational and cultural policymakers in China, it provides insight into the gaps between urban children's reading needs and the current performances of public libraries. Some trends observed, such as the cooperation between public and private libraries to provide reading services to children, may shed light on the improvement of children's reading socialisation towards a more inclusive and productive future.

Pavone, Marta 

*Quête de chance pour une vie prospère: Ethnologie de l'économie de la chance dans le temple de Tudi Gong du Hongludi Nanshan Fude (Hang-lôo-tē) à Taïwan* 

[In search of Luck for a Prosperous Life: Ethnology of Economy of Luck in the Tudi Gong Temple of Hongludi]


Inalco, France, December 2024

Supervisor: Catherine Capdeville-Zeng

Keywords: Anthropology, Tudi Gong, Luck, Gift economy, Taiwan

Abstract:

This dissertation is based on an ethnological survey of Hongludi Nanshan Fude Temple (referred to in this dissertation by his Hokkien name, Hang-lôo-tē), located on Nanshijiao Hill in Zhonghe District, New Taipei, and dedicated to the worship of Tudi Gong, the “God of Earth”. The aim of this dissertation is to analyse the temple’s economy, identified here as the “economy of luck”. By this term, we refer to the ways in which luck, believed to circulate within the temple area, is managed and distributed to people. The economy of luck in Hang-lôo-tē is characterized by exchanges between humans and spirits for the request of caiyun 財運, or “the luck for becoming rich”. This dissertation builds on the work of Roberte Hamayon on randomness in Siberia and, in the sino-taiwanese context, on the research of Stéphanie Homola and Fiorella Allio. We will identify two circuits of luck: the first is based on a redistribution centralized by a selected group (the Temple Committee), while the second involves personal interactions between the worshipper, deities and “predestined affinity” (yuanfen 緣分). In the end, this dissertation aims to observe how humans and spirits participate in the circulation of luck, and how deities are perceived not as abstract and elusive entities, but as real, invisible social actors who operate in the visible world.

Perinçek Karavit, Kiraz 

*Mobile art along the Silk Roads: Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings* 

Bogaziçi University, History Department, Türkiye, September 2023

Supervisor: Selçuk Esenbel

Keywords: global history, Silk Road studies, mobility studies, narrative painting

Abstract:

This dissertation aims to put a group of paintings back in their historical contexts, among which they had been mobile along the ancient Silk Roads. Known as Mehmed Siyah Kalem paintings, these unique works of art are found cut and pasted on various folios of two albums in Topkapi Palace Museum Library.

The artistic style with Chinese impact, materials, and themes of nomadic life implicate a production environment at the intersection of Chinese and Central Asian Turkic realms in the fourteenth century. Although scholars assume their purpose is to illustrate recitations, they are deprived of their original format. Other works of art in the albums support their compilation in the Akkoyunlu court in Tabriz during the fifteenth century. Shreds of evidence strengthen their entry into the Ottoman court as spoils in Selim I's reign (1512-1520). Subject to photography projects stolen from the Ottoman Palace Library, some of them were smuggled to urban sites of Orientalism at the turn of the twentieth century.

This dissertation contributes to the literature in solving the enigma of these paintings in three aspects: first is the abundant groundbreaking sources to enlighten various dark moments of the paintings' mobility. Second is the analysis to reveal the links with Chinese artistic traditions and to substantiate the storytelling function in daily practices. The last and fundamental contribution of this study is the theoretical framework that presents these paintings as mobility elements with shifting local meanings and global implications, where through these perception changes, we can trace historical transformations.

Puglia, Francesca 

*Taiyi sheng shui 太一生水: a new cosmological reading of the Guodian 郭店 manuscript*

Bern University, Institute of Philosophy, Switzerland, September 2023

Supervisors: Richard King and Constance A. Cook

Keywords: Taiyi 太一, excavated manuscripts, astronomy in early China, Taiyi sheng shui 太一生水, Chu 楚

Abstract:

After thirty years from the discovery in 1993 of the Guodian 郭店 Chu slips in the Guodian tombs in Jingmen 荊門, the significance of the fourteen bamboo slips collected by the editors of the Guodian Chu mu zhujian 郭店楚墓竹簡 under the title Taiyi sheng shui 太一生水 (TYSS) remains mysterious. Traditionally, Taiyi 太一 is understood as a concept close to the dao 道 of the Daodejing 道德經 and corresponding to the pole star, and, consequently, the first half of the text as a cosmogony. Because of inconsistencies in these readings of the text, scholarship is still divided in its interpretation.


The aim of this thesis is to offer a new reading of the manuscript, according to which Taiyi is an alternative name for the sun and the first half of the text actually represents a cosmological cycle, the understanding of which is an object of fundamental knowledge by the shengren 聖人 (wise noble) for state administration. The arguments supporting this reading lie first of all in the concrete vocabulary employed in the text, which finds striking parallels in several other ancient Chinese texts. These sources describe the sun both as a celestial body that runs its path through the sky and as a god, and point out its role in granting the existence of the “ten thousand things,” providing images similar to those which imbue the TYSS. Taiyi in the TYSS is in fact depicted as moving with the seasons, completing a cycle and beginning anew, and hiding in water, and is defined as the mother and the warp of the ten thousand things—all descriptions that may support the claim that Taiyi refers to the sun: the first chapter of this thesis is entirely devoted to demonstrating this correspondence.

The second chapter is dedicated to clarifying the role of shui 水 (the second agent brought up already in the first sentence of the TYSS) in the cosmology as the water, mostly rivers, involved in the hydrological cycle activated by the sun, and fundamental for the irrigation of the agricultural fields.

The third and the fourth chapters provide a contextualization of the TYSS against the background of the excavated manuscripts from the Chu area and transmitted Chu textual sources. Particular attention is devoted to a confrontation with the Guodian Laozi 郭店老子 and the broader Daodejing-related textual tradition and with the Chu bo shu 楚帛書 excavated from Changsha 長沙.

The fifth and last chapter closes the circle of questions left open in the previous chapters: if the wise noble has services to look after in the state, distancing himself from the Laozian shengren who, conversely, does not act, what is the domain of these services? How are they connected to the relevance given to the knowledge of the sun’s patterns and of the hydrological cycle? These questions are answered by reading the text against the background of a fundamentally hydraulic society, in which crops represented both sustenance of the people, taxes, and ritual offerings.

Qi, Yue

*Un échange interculturel sino-européen à la fin du XIXe siècle. Idéaux, pratiques et enjeux intellectuels chez Chen Jitong* 

[A Sino-European cultural exchange at the end of the 19th century. Ideals, practices and intellectual issues in Chen Jitong's work"]


ENS-PSL, France, 2023 (November)

Supervisor: Michel Espagne

Keywords: Francophone literature, Diplomat-writer, Chen Jitong, Intercultural mediator, Cultural transfers, Sino-European exchanges

Abstract:

In Sino-European relations after the Opium Wars, the Self-Strengthening Movement (1861-1895) was defined not only by pragmatic economic reforms. It saw the creation of new international institutions, including the first Chinese embassies, as well as Western-style arsenals and schools that trained a new generation of intellectuals whose influence continued into the early 20th century, fostering cross-cultural exchanges between Europe and China. This thesis examines Sino-European exchanges at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries by studying the political and cultural activities of Chen Jitong, a French-trained diplomat-writer who stayed in Europe between 1875 and 1891 as part of the Movement. In the first part of this thesis, we examine the possibility of spontaneous modernity in China in the context of colonialism, questioning the interactions with Europe in the new diplomatic relations, especially the reciprocal cultural impacts made by Chen Jitong and other reformist intellectuals. In the second part, we propose that in the 1880s, Chen's activities as a figure of "Tout-Paris" were integrated into the political landscape of the early Third Republic and the fin-de-siècle literary milieu. We then examine the underlying tensions in diplomatic and artistic circles and the enrichment of European literature. Finally, in the third section, we define the parallel socio-cultural transformations in Europe and China around 1900 by investigating Chen's late activities after his return. Working as an engineer, translator, and publisher, he promoted Western civilization in China at a time of developing European imperialism and the end of the Chinese empire, despite the reforms. Our study of this emblematic figure between two civilizations and two eras proves invaluable for the historiography of Sino-European relations, Francophone literature, European sinology, and Chinese modernization.

Ren, Sijie 

*Science and Politics in Maoist China: The Synthetic Insulin Project and its Legacy*

University of Bristol, United Kingdom, November 2024

Supervisors: Robert Bickers and Adrian Howkins

Keywords: Mao-era, Basic Science, Politics

Abstract:

Science and politics were deeply interwoven during the Mao era. This thesis examines the synthetic insulin project, widely recognised among Mao-era China's most significant scientific achievements, to explore the complex interplay between political imperatives and scientific progress. This study seeks to understand how and why the synthetic insulin project was initiated, how it succeeded, and the broader implications of its success. Drawing on various kinds of materials, this thesis provides a nuanced analysis of the motivations behind the synthetic insulin project. It argues that the project was driven by Maoist political movements and communist ideology, in conjunction with the influence of Western scientific developments in biochemistry, especially the discovery of the sequence and composition of insulin. The successful collaboration between well-trained scientists and moderate cadres within the Chinese Communist Party, coupled with a period of relative political stability, created a crucial window for scientific advancement. The synthesis of insulin, the world's first synthetic crystalline protein, became a significant scientific milestone and a potent political symbol, offering valuable resources and narratives for the Chinese government. Through its exploration of this project, the thesis not only sheds light on the dynamics of Maoist China but also invites a rethinking of how scientific research can be deeply embedded within the political frameworks of their time. The study reveals the broader implications of the relationship between science and political forces in shaping national narratives and memories.



Sio, Ka I 

*Representing Hong Kong Identity in Newspapers: A Corpus-based Study of 'Hongkonger', 2001-2020* 

Durham University, United Kingdom, September 2023

Supervisor: Qing CAO


Keywords: China, Hong Kong, Hongkonger, identity, media, postcolonialism

Abstract:

In the twenty-two years from the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to the People's Republic of China in 1997 to the months-long political protests sparked by the controversial plan to allow extraditions to mainland China in 2019, Hong Kong's political changes reached a tipping point and led to an identity crisis for its people. Using Homi Bhabha's 'hybridity' idea as theoretical framework, this study investigates Hong Kong people's postcoloniality and unveils the complex relationship between Hong Kong's political movements and Hongkongers' postcolonial political mind-set.

Due to newspapers' close connection with local people and politics, articles from five Hong Kong newspapers, namely, Apple Daily (蘋果日報), Hong Kong Economic Journal (信報), Ming Pao (明報), Oriental Daily (東方日報), and Wen Wei Po (文匯報), are examined to focus on changes in the Hongkonger identity between 2001 and 2020, a period covering several iconic post-handover political incidents. A methodology consisting of corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis, and in-depth interviews is adopted to analyse the material in both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and helps to answer the following three questions: (1) How has the Hongkonger identity been represented by the five case study newspapers in the sample period? (2) Why was this identity represented in these ways? What are motivating factors that led to such representations? (3) What journalistic strategies have the newspapers adopted to mobilise people, and why?

By examining the three most conflict-laden political movements in post-handover Hong Kong—the Moral and National Education controversy in 2012, the Umbrella Movement in 2014, and the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill protests in 2019—this study argues that Hongkongers' political postcoloniality intensified the conflicts hidden in the 'in-between' Hongkonger identity, thereby aggravating mainland China-Hong Kong tensions and eventually bringing the city to a point of 'no turning back'.

Sun, Chang 

*Blurred Boundaries and Eroded Independence: An Alternative History Written by Chinese Independent Documentary*

The University of Manchester, United Kingdom, July 2024


Supervisors: Anastasia Valassopoulos and Felicia Chan

Keywords: Chinese independent documentary, Chinese cinema

Abstract:

The production and circulation of Chinese independent documentaries in China has increasingly become a grey zone in recent years. In order to investigate the reason behind this, the thesis explores the answers to three research questions. First, what the independent spirit is supposed to be in the Chinese context. Second, how have the boundaries of independence been blurred under the influence of the domestic and international film market. And third, what might be the result of this eroded independence. Since its emergence, there have been many literatures on Chinese independent documentary and its interaction with the government and the film festival circuit, with researchers focusing more on Chinese documentarians, especially their confrontations against the authorities and the cultural capital they gained overseas. This thesis further examines the intermediary role the NGOs played in this dynamic structural play, discussing how their intervention shaped the style and content of Chinese independent documentaries, and more importantly, how the medial information accumulated in this process constructed an alternative history of contemporary China. This thesis reviews the development of Chinese documentaries since 1949. Using an integrated framework based on theory of cultural capital by Bourdieu, each chapter provides a thorough analysis on Chinese independent documentarians and their interaction with different actors, respectively the government, international film festivals and the NGOs. These analyses shed light on how the boundaries of independent filmmaking have been eroded on the practical level as a result of the interplay of different forms of capital. This thesis considers the ambiguous attitude of the government towards independent documentaries not as an obstacle, but an opportunity for the NGOs to negotiate with it, to find space for the development of a China-centred independent film network, where certain historical events could be interpreted and represented from a rather personal perspective. History writing eventually became the site where independent documentaries and the Chinese government struggled for authority.

Tähtinen, Tero

*Tyhjä vuori, tyhjä mieli : Ihmisen ja luonnon suhde klassisessa kiinalaisessa luontorunoudessa* 

[Empty Mountain, Empty Mind. The Relationship between Human and Nature in Classical Chinese Poetry]

Tampere University, Finland, October 2024

Supervisor: Sari Kivistö

Keywords: Chinese poetry, landscape poetry, Chinese Buddhism, Wang Wei, Tao Qian

Abstract:

My article-based dissertation discusses the relationship between human and nature in classical Chinese poetry. It focuses especially on the so-called Six dynasties period (220–589 CE) and the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE). Chinese landscape poetry in its present-day sense came into being during the fourth and the fifth centuries. Metrical shi poetry reached its maturity during the Tang which is widely known as the golden era of Chinese poetry.

The object of my study is a group of classical Chinese poems which illustrate the basic principles of Chinese nature philosophy and simultaneously demonstrate the variety and richness of the Chinese poetic tradition. I pay special attention to the poetry of Wang Wei, Wei Yingwu and Tao Qian through which different conceptual dimensions of the Chinese landscape become apparent. Wang is known particularly for his quatrains depicting the realm of wild nature. Wei wrote poems in which the landscape emerges out of the imagination while, in his verses, Tao described the Chinese agrarian milieu and the way of life associated with it.

The theoretical framework of my study is based on several interlocking disciplines contributing to discussions of Chinese studies and literary scholarship on several different fronts, utilizing the tradition of classical sinology but juxtaposing it with modern Western ecocriticism and human geography. One purpose of this research is to approach familiar and previously analyzed poems from new angles which are also linked to current humanistic debates.

The dissertation consists of four peer-reviewed articles which set out to shed light on the relationship between human and nature from different points of view. The main questions that run through all of them are: 1. How does the Chinese tradition understand the concept of “landscape” and in what ways does it differ from Western understanding? 2. How is the Chinese conception of landscape thematized in classical Chinese poetry and by what poetic means is the relationship between human and nature depicted and produced in it?

The first of the four articles functions as an introduction to the theme and presents the basic philosophical principles and worldview of the Chinese landscape tradition. This is in contrast to the Western idea, where landscape exists primarily as an object of visual perception, describing instead an all-encompassing natural cosmology of which the human being is an inseparable part. The second article discusses Wei Yingwu’s and Wang Wei’s poems in which nature appears not as a physical object but as a volatile imaginative experience. The objective of this article is to question and examine the traditional idea that Chinese poetry treats physical reality as one-dimensional. The third article presents a reading of Wang Wei’s ‘Wang Stream Collection’ which is based on the Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrine of ‘no-self.’ My main claim is that Wang’s terse yet suggestive landscape poems do not, after all, depict external natural objects but have to

do with the deep meditative experience of selflessness in which perceiver and perception can no longer be separated. In the fourth article I address the dimensions of 'space' and 'place' in Tao Qian's poetry which centers on a farmstead and its way of life. Through my analyses I seek to demonstrate that for Tao a farmstead is not just a concrete locus but a place that becomes 'lived' in various senses and also has a spiritual and ethical significance.

My study highlights themes and conceptions related to the interface between human and nature that differs markedly from the Western tradition. For instance, classical Chinese poetry, together with the classical Chinese language, enables depictions of the dissolution of the self which in Western poetry has remained marginal. This type of experience has received practically no attention whatever within the context of ecocriticism.

The main thesis of my dissertation is that the classical Chinese worldview and the landscape poetry stemming from it present a much more profound and complex relationship between human and nature than obtains within the Western, subject-oriented tradition. Taking this into account would serve to inform and enrich comparative humanistic nature studies.

Tong, Hanbing

*Rewriting Cultural Hybridity: Postcolonial Mirror Images in Somerset Maugham and Eileen Chang* 

University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom, June 2024


Supervisors: Christopher Rosenmeier and Michelle Keown

Keywords: Eileen Chang, W. Somerset Maugham, Orientalism, postcolonial, cultural hybridity

Abstract:

Eileen Chang (1920-1995) is one of the most read authors in the history of Chinese literature. There is a fair amount of scholarship on her work, and a few scholars have started exploring the representation of colonial matters in her Shanghai and Hong Kong short stories from the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). However, in English academia, there are no longer studies looking specifically at Chang's representation of wartime cultural tensions in comparison to the colonial writings of the popular British writer W. Somerset Maugham (1874-1965). Considering the postcolonial and transnational contexts of both Chang's and Maugham's educational and personal backgrounds, Chang's preference for Maugham's Far East tales, as well as the lack of interest in Maugham's colonial narratives in both Chinese and English scholarship, this research will question the notion that to write authentically or sincerely about postcolonial issues of a certain country, one has to be a native of that country. It will also explore that, if bearing the early awareness of Orientalism, to what extent Maugham was deliberately being ironic in writing about the cultural parody by juxtaposing with Chang's colonial narratives set in the (semi-)colonial Shanghai and Hong Kong.

Tucci, Tommaso 

*L'Iconicità dell'ordine delle parole del cinese mandarino standard* 

[Iconicity in Standard Mandarin Chinese Word Order]

Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano, Italia, April 2024


Supervisor: Chiara Piccinini

Keywords: syntactic iconicity, L2 Chinese acquisition, applied cognitive linguistics, L2 Chinese teaching

Abstract:

The dissertation aims to demonstrate the extensive descriptive and motivational power of syntactic iconicity in illustrating the word order of Standard Mandarin Chinese (MC). It examines the most discussed iconic principles in the literature related to the cognitive-functional framework, based on studies by James H.-Y. Tai (1985, 1989, among others). On the applied level, the study's objective is pursued through the analysis of an error corpus extracted from written compositions of Italian-speaking learners of MC as a second language, encompassing different levels of linguistic proficiency. The analysis of errors in the corpus has led to the development of a taxonomy of principles intended to assist MC instructors and researchers in creating innovative teaching materials and fostering a motivated instructional approach. These pedagogical insights aim to present syntax as motivated through illustrations directly linked to learners' perceptual and conceptual experiences. Ultimately, this pedagogical strategy enhances their grammatical accuracy and metalinguistic knowledge.

Wai, Cheuk Yee 

*Sisters in Crime: Women and illicit sexual affairs in late imperial Chinese erotic fiction* 

University of Oxford, United Kingdom, December 2022

Supervisor: Tian Yuan Tan

**Keywords:** Chinese novels, erotic literature, women in literature, late imperial China, Ming fiction, Qing fiction

**Abstract:**

This research aims to investigate the literary representation of the female relationships and illicit sexual affairs in late imperial China erotic fiction. Focusing on the plots of *touqing* 偷情 (having secret sexual affairs), this research utilises five selected examples of vernacular erotic fiction composed around 1572–1730 as the main source to investigate women's lives and social activities in illegal circumstances: *Langshi* 浪史 (Chronicles of the Libertine), *Xiuta yeshi* 繡榻野史 (Unofficial History of the Embroidered Couch), *Rou putuan* 肉蒲團 (The Carnal Prayer Mat), *Taohua ying* 桃花影 (Shadow of Peach Blossoms), and *Dengcao heshang zhuan* 燈草和尚傳 (Legend of the Candlewick Monk).

Bonded with their own desire to be fulfilled, female participants of illicit affairs each have a specific role, function, and things to offer, forming a network comprised of these unlikely sisters in crime. To understand how such a network functions and sustains, female characters of the texts will first be grouped and analysed based on their image and common traits respective to their chief identity in the text. The discussion will then lead to an investigation of the interactions portrayed to reveal the respective role of each female type and their implications for the perceived female relationship under the exceptional circumstances of collaboration on sex crimes. The research will also compare the relationships portrayed in erotic fiction and other literature of the era, including *Honglou meng* and *Jim Ping Mei*, to illustrate the unique behaviour and network derived from the collective participation in illicit sexual affairs.

Wang, Jingyi Veronica

*Queering Chinese Youth Cultures: Biopolitical Negotiations in Post-Xi China* 

University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, June 2024

Supervisor: Heather Inwood


Keywords: Queer theory, Chinese Studies, Queer Studies, Cultural Studies, Subcultural Studies, Chinese Youth

Abstract:

Post-Xi Chinese society stands at the confluence of shifting norms, with the administration transitioning from neoliberal developmentalism to a more biopolitical mode of social governance. Amidst these changes, Chinese youths are particularly susceptible to the state's stringent control over the production of 'docile bodies' through the power of normalisation. Utilising multidisciplinary methods, this study juxtaposes a diverse sampling of youth cultures to reveal how Chinese youth are actively crafting 'queer' subjectivities, transforming subordination into agency, in order to navigate their non-normative 'selves' within Chinese society's disciplinary regimes. It comparatively explores the intersections and divergences of two sets of contemporary Chinese youth cultures that have emerged from the margins of the normative mainstream: the respective sexual minority cultures of the sexuality-based 'LGBT' self-identified community and the more fluid and cosmopolitan 'queer/ku'er' culture; the shamate culture of young migrant workers that first arose in 2008, and the 'sub-youth' trend amongst urban young people in the 2020s, along with the polarised cultural interactions between the two peer cohorts over the period of a decade. Drawing from queer theory's ontological interrogation of 'normativity' and its associated power relations, this thesis delves into the nuanced remoulding of subjectivities and state-society relations facilitated by various cultural practices in Xi-era China. These case studies serve as a microcosm of the broader dynamics of young individuals' negotiation with the heightened normalising pressure on their desires, aspirations, and self-perceptions. Ultimately, this thesis aims to contribute a new understanding of Chinese state-individual negotiations embedded in their cultural interplay from a 'queer perspective', and of the transformative potential of a 'queer' standpoint in studying contemporary cultures.



Wnuk, Zuzanna 

*Rozwój metajęzykowej świadomości ortograficznej w kontekście nauczania i uczenia się języka chińskiego jako języka obcego* 

[Development of Metalinguistic Orthographic Awareness in the Context of Teaching and Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language]

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland, May 2024

Supervisors: Halina Wasilewska and Kamil Burkiewicz


**Keywords:** Chinese writing system, Chinese as a foreign language, metalinguistic orthographic awareness, Chinese character, sinogram

**Abstract:**

The primary aim of this dissertation was to investigate the development of metalinguistic orthographic awareness in learners of Chinese as a foreign language, particularly those from outside of the Sinographosphere. Three critical aspects of metalinguistic orthographic awareness of the Chinese writing system were identified: graphemic awareness (concerning structural relationships between strokes, components, and elements), grapho-morphemic awareness (how a Chinese character and its parts connect with meaning), and grapho-phonetic awareness (how a Chinese character and its parts connect with pronunciation).

Qualitative research methods, in particular phenomenographic methods and prepared research tools (i.e. semi-structured interview and metalinguistic orthographic awareness test), led to a better understanding of how learners perceive Chinese characters, how their perception changes with increasing language proficiency, and how metalinguistic orthographic awareness develops over time. The study revealed a discrepancy between declarative and procedural knowledge, which gradually diminished with rising language proficiency. The following qualitative shifts in the perception of Chinese characters were identified: a change in the perception of character structure, a decrease in the perception of characters as pictographic, and an increase in integrated perception of various aspects of Chinese characters. Furthermore, the study confirmed that different aspects of orthographic awareness develop at different rates.

To conclude the study, an original model for processing Chinese characters was proposed. The aim of this model is to accommodate the needs of Chinese language teaching and learning in institutional environments. The proposed model is also adaptable to different stages of metalinguistic orthographic awareness development. Implications of the findings for teaching practice were also discussed, including suggested teaching content at various learning stages and types of tasks supporting the development of metalinguistic orthographic awareness. The necessity of supporting the development of orthographic awareness in students was also emphasized, given its crucial role in facilitating the learning process of the Chinese writing system and the further development of language proficiency.

Xia, Yuhua 

*Traduire dans la Chine moderne et contemporaine: Oulipo et littérature à contraintes* 

[Translating in Modern and Contemporary China: Oulipo and Constrained Literature]

INALCO, France, December 2024

Supervisor: Isabelle Rabut

Keywords: Translation, Modern and Contemporary China, Oulipo, Constrained literature

Abstract:

China's modern and contemporary period is marked by unprecedented exchanges with the West, with translation playing a crucial role. Oulipo's constrained literature, born from questioning European logocentrism, occupies a unique position both external to China and marginal in Western culture. This position makes it an effective tool for deconstructing China's reflection on the West and studying the country's cultural and intellectual transformations. The reception of Oulipo in China, mainly through translation, illuminates literature, culture, thought, and translation itself in this context. The paradox of Oulipo in China – being translated without appreciation and exploited without understanding – reflects the complexity of issues related to translation and the source culture. Studying the history of translation in China since modern times and analyzing translations of constrained works highlight tensions between imported cultural models, represented by European logocentrism, and the persistence of Chinese traditions. They also reveal translation's ambivalent role in these confrontations, oscillating between importing new paradigms and reaffirming local traditions. These observations show how China and its intellectuals negotiate their cultural identity facing foreign influences, particularly Western ones, while seeking to preserve and reinterpret their traditions. Translation thus emerges as an essential vector of this complex dynamic, reflecting the challenges and opportunities of Chinese modernization.

Xin, Shengxi 

*Neo-exogenous Development: Conceptualising Rural Revitalisation in China. A Study on Modern Agricultural Zones* 

University College London, United Kingdom, March 2024

Supervisors: Nick Gallent and Iqbal Hamiduddin

**Keywords:** rural development, China, rural revitalization, social innovation, neo-endogenous development, state entrepreneurship, CPC

**Abstract:**

Since the launch of its “New Socialist Countryside Construction” (NSCC) programme in 2005, China has experienced significant rural restructuring, marked by both new urban-rural connectivity and a diversification of rural socio-economic and spatial structures. Thereafter, and under the Xi administration, the “National Rural Revitalisation Strategy” was launched. It can be considered to be both a successor to the NSCC and to represent renewed effort to integrate pluralising rural society into the party-state apparatus through state programmes that increasingly involve local and external social stakeholders in the implementation stage. This national integration process of rural society, also known as rural integration, is in line with China’s rural governance and development tradition which both date back to Imperial China. Viewed in this manner, the NRRS can be seen as part of a broader state-building objective.

This recent governance transition has led to the emergence of a hybrid rural development approach which is referred to, in this thesis, as “neo-exogenous development” (NED). Unlike community-oriented (neo-)endogenous development approaches, NED is characterised by a party-state-led collaborative innovation process in which the ‘active party-state’ – comprised of both central- and local- state bureaucrats and semi-formal rural party agents – act as the primary development actors rather than civil society groups. In addition to physical improvement, the NED aims to guide rural communities towards becoming “activated communities” that understand how to communicate and cooperate with the “active party-state”, as a result of rural integration.

This thesis has two main goals: first, it provides deeper understanding of rural development theory and practice in China, by shifting to a conception of rural development that is rooted in the longer Chinese experience of state-building and unique party-state regime rather than in Western (and mainly European) analyses. Secondly, it unpacks the operational mechanisms and policy effectiveness of NED, which are represented in the thesis by the Modern Agricultural Zone (MAZ). For the purpose of evaluation, effectiveness centres on the propensity of a development model to generate and retain local value, a major challenge for global rural development practice.

Xing, Longfei

*Western Students in Mao's China: Policies and Education*

University of Cologne, Germany, May 2024

Supervisor: Felix Wemheuer

**Keywords:** Cold War diplomacy, educational exchange, Maoist China, United Front strategy, Sino-Western relations

**Abstract:**

This dissertation provides a comprehensive exploration of the history of Western students in the People's Republic of China during the Mao era, aiming to elucidate the socio-political and diplomatic dynamics of Maoist China through the unique perspective of Western students. The admission of foreign students was pivotal in the government's diplomatic strategies and the Communist Party's maneuvers during this era. Against the backdrop of the Cold War, 516 Western students entered Mao's China, where they were treated as foreign guests and received a Maoist education that served proletarian politics and combined with productive labor.


The research addresses several key questions: Firstly, it investigates the policies governing Western students and seeks to uncover the underlying intentions behind these policies. Secondly, it examines the distinctive features of the education imparted to Western students and evaluates the impact of this education on their perception and understanding of China. Lastly, it explores the role of Western student education in China's foreign strategies throughout the Mao era.

By adopting a multidisciplinary approach that combines historical and sociological research methodologies, this study's findings reveal that Western students' education during the Mao era was a class-orientated initiative meticulously overseen by the Chinese Communist Party and government institutions. Undertaken through colleges and universities, it predominantly targeted Western youths with leftist political views or harboring a favorable disposition towards Mao's China. The ultimate objective was to cultivate a proper understanding of the nation among the students, fostering favorable views and nurturing positive sentiments of socialist China.

The education and management of Western students in Mao's China served as a potent instrument of people's diplomacy, aligned with the country's diplomatic objectives. This approach to the Chinese-style people's diplomacy, which interweaved elements of both state and people, formed an integral component of Mao's foreign policy towards the West, strategically intending to project China's influence globally by enlisting Western supporters of socialist China. This study contributes to our understanding of Western student education as a component of people's diplomacy during the Mao era and its significance in the context of the bipolarity of the Cold War.

Xu, Tianhua

Currently associate professor in the School of Foreign Languages of Guangzhou College of Commerce.

*Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis of Women's Representation in Shen Bao (1872-1949) and People's Daily (1950-2012)* 

Durham University, United Kingdom, August 2022

Supervisor: Qing Cao

Keywords: Chinese Women, rejection of roles, Corpus Analysis, CDA

Abstract:


This thesis aims to explore and analyse women's representations in *Shen Bao* (1872-1949) and *People's Daily* (1950-2012) in China over a period of 140 years (1872-2012). Combining the quantitative corpus analysis of 1.9 million words of data with qualitative analyses using critical discourse analysis (CDA), it examines four distinctive historical eras in the press portrayal of women: late imperial Qing (1872-1911), Republican (1912-1949), socialist (1950-1978) and post-socialist (1979-2012). During these 140 years, China experienced dramatic sociocultural shifts and political transformations under the guidance of different ideologies over this crucial historical time. Women were placed right in the centre of this turmoil, and women's roles have continuously been renewed, recreated, defended and modified (Williams, 1977). Women were deemed inferior to men were nothing more than the result of social constructions. Women's representations are embedded in ideological frameworks supported by existing power relations in the patriarchal society. They operated in the symbolic world through discursive construction that defines women in ways that shape the social understanding of their role, status and identities. This construction of women by the dominant forces in society serves to sustain the existing patriarchal power relations. The thesis focuses on newspapers because of its central role in shaping public opinions, setting agendas, and maintaining power structure.

Broadsheet newspapers have the power to define key issues, topics, and situations which gives them ideological power. CDA pays attention to both the macro-level of context through a top-down approach, and the micro-level by analysing how ideologies, dominance and power relations are expressed in language. In contrast, Corpus Linguistics (CL) deals with large amounts of text by providing detailed information of the micro-level. CL is basically a bottom-up approach, allowing the data generated in a corpus to take the lead, and thereby limits bias. The data generated by corpus analytical tools in CL is not handpicked data selected by the analyst, it is typical and representative linguistic patterns that have been extracted from a large amount of data.

Women's representations have undergone significant transformations across the four historical eras in China as some women gain more economic independence and could challenge the power hierarchies. In the late Qing era, women were not described as the opposite gender of men, but are represented as the weak, incompetent, decadent, and pathological symbol of premodernity in *Shen Bao*. Articles in *Shen Bao* promoted representations of women as "Mothers of the Nation" and "Heroines", which are variations of traditional "good wife and mother" and "devoted to husband and son" sugar-coated with modern nationalism. In the socialist era, women were mostly represented as strong, masculine, selfless, and ideologically correct workers in the labour force, and as emotionally and physically the same as men. Women lived and breathed for the state, and were willing to devote their lives, youth and efforts to communism

and socialism. In the post-socialist era, women's representations in the *People's Daily* are more diverse. Discourses on women throughout the 140 years acted as a tool to legitimize various national agendas. This study offers empirical evidence and provides a macro level picture of the transformation of women's representations in the 140 years of history, underpinning the drive behind; also a micro level analysis of detailed discussion on the confliction and consistencies of women discourse over the four historical eras. Women's studies have their origin outside of China, in the west. I hope this study will shed some light onto the many components of the scarcely researched localization of west women theories into Chinese terms, which I believe is the next important issue and the next biggest challenge in women's studies in China.

Xu, Weijun 

*Nationalism or Cost-Benefit Analysis in Perception: The Logic of China's Foreign Policy Choices in Bilateral Disputes in Post-Cold War Period* 

University of Cambridge, UK, June 2024

Supervisor: John Nilsson-Wright

**Keywords:** China, foreign policy, nationalism, perception, Sino-Japanese relations, Sino-South Korean relations, Sino-U.S. relations

**Abstract:**

This research discusses the changes in the degree of toughness of China's foreign policy choices in bilateral international disputes over the period from 1992 to 2022. This research first reviews previous explanations of why the Chinese government adopts tough foreign policies in international disputes in academia. In response to the popular view that underline the influence of nationalism, this research analyses contemporary Chinese nationalism and its impact on the Chinese government's foreign policy choices. Contemporary Chinese nationalism can be divided into two types: official nationalism and popular nationalism. Official nationalism demands unconditional loyalty of its adherents to the Chinese government and does not exert pressure on the Chinese government's foreign policy choices. Popular nationalism, due to its considerable social mobilization capacity, may have the potential to influence the Chinese government's foreign policy choices through a bottom-up approach, especially in the context of the Chinese government's increasing reliance on nationalism for its regime legitimacy.

By examining the changes in the Chinese government's economic performance and the social mobilization capacity of popular nationalism, this research finds that the Chinese government faced two primary scenarios between 1992 and 2022. In the first scenario, roughly between 1992 and 2012, the Chinese government was able to maintain good economic performance while popular nationalism had a strong capacity for social mobilization. In this scenario, the Chinese government did not need to resort to nationalism as an important source of regime legitimacy, and the pressure exerted by popular nationalists was not sufficient to undermine the legitimacy base of the Chinese government. In the second scenario, roughly between 2013 and 2022, the Chinese government was only able to maintain limited economic performance while the social mobilization capacity of popular nationalism was significantly reduced. In this scenario, the Chinese government strengthened its control over popular nationalism, rendering it no longer able to pressure the Chinese government's decision-making through social movements. Moreover, the regime legitimacy of the Chinese government was not overly dependent on nationalism, and the Chinese government was still able to afford the policy costs of adopting a foreign policy that does not meet the demands of popular nationalism. Therefore, within the timeframe covered by this research, the influence of nationalism is not sufficient to explain the toughness of the foreign policies adopted by the Chinese government in bilateral international disputes.


This research assumes that the Chinese government is a rational actor during the timeframe covered by this research, and its foreign policy decisions in disputes are rational and consistent. This assumption is valid in all cases examined in this research, as China's top leaders were structurally constrained by the collective leadership system and there had been no instances in which the majority of China's political

elites identified with irrational and antagonistic nationalist sentiments. This research establishes an analytical framework for China's foreign policy choices in bilateral disputes based on this assumption. This analytical framework includes three independent variables and one dependent variable. The dependent variable is the degree of toughness of the foreign policies adopted by the Chinese government in bilateral international disputes. And the independent variables include the Chinese government's perception of the importance of the particular bilateral relations, its perception of the priority of the various interests involved in the dispute, and its perception of the severity of the dispute.

This research applies this analytical framework to the analysis of eight disputes between China and Japan over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands issues and historical issues, fourteen disputes between China and the United States over the Taiwan issue, economic and trade issues, and the issues of United States Armed Forces infringing China's sovereignty, and six disputes between China and South Korea over the security issue, the fishing issue, and the historical issues. Through the analysis of these 28 bilateral international disputes, this research finds that, holding other variables constant, the Chinese government's perception of the importance of a given set of bilateral relations is negatively correlated with the degree of toughness of the foreign policies adopted by the Chinese government in bilateral international disputes, while the Chinese government's perception of the priority of the interests involved in the dispute and its perception of the severity of the dispute are positively correlated with the degree of toughness of the foreign policies adopted by the Chinese government in bilateral international disputes.



Xu, Yingying 

*La Ricezione e la diffusione della figura di Marco Polo in Cina* 

[The Reception and Dissemination of Marco Polo's Image in China]

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italy, June 2024

Supervisor: Tiziana Lippiello

Keywords: Marco Polo, The Travels of Marco Polo, China

Abstract:

Marco Polo (1254-1324), an Italian merchant and one of the world's most renowned explorers, set out for China in 1271 with his father Niccolò and uncle Matteo. Traveling from Venice along the Silk Road, they reached China, where they were warmly received by the court of the Yuan dynasty. Upon arriving in Beijing, the capital of the Yuan dynasty, Marco Polo gained the appreciation and trust of the Great Khan Kublai. This enabled him to live in and explore China for 17 years, returning to Venice only in 1291. His journey fostered intense cultural exchanges between the East and the West, enhancing mutual understanding and positively influencing both civilizations. The account of his travels, entitled “Le Devisement du Monde”, stands as a historical testament to early cultural exchanges between these two ancient civilizations, laying a solid foundation for Sino-Italian friendship.

Through his travel notes, Marco Polo provided his Western contemporaries with a detailed account of Eastern civilization, both in its material and spiritual aspects. He particularly highlighted the social features, historical events, products, and customs of China at the dawn of the Yuan dynasty, under Mongol rule. The value of his narrative lies in the objectivity with which he documented his observations, free from prejudice, relying on documented evidence, and faithfully recording what he saw and heard across various parts of China. He precisely described the prosperity of major cities and trading ports, such as Yuan Dadu (Beijing) 元大都(北京), Xi'an 西安, Nanjing 南京, Zhenjiang 镇江, Yangzhou 扬州, Suzhou 苏州, Hangzhou 杭州, Fuzhou 福州, and Quanzhou 泉州. His literary work opened the doors of the mysterious Eastern world to Westerners, significantly expanding their knowledge of the Far East and enriching European geographical understanding. This stimulated exploration of new maritime routes and accelerated the arrival of the Age of Discovery. It can be said that Marco Polo's account of his great journey inaugurated a new era of exchanges between the West and the East, exerting a monumental influence on the development of Europe and the world at large, with undeniably positive effects. His remarkable achievements have rendered him immortal in China, elevating him to an emblematic figure in human history.


Although Marco Polo's figure became known in China only from the 1830s onwards, within less than two centuries, he has become one of the most famous foreigners in the country through various communication channels and methods. Regarded as a pioneer of cultural exchange between China and the West and a “good friend” of the Chinese people, Marco Polo frequently appears in textbooks, historical books, popular science writings, literary works, and art pieces. Statues, museums, and memorials dedicated to him can be found in several cities mentioned in his travel notes, such as the Marco Polo Memorial Hall in Yangzhou and the statue of Marco Polo near West Lake in Hangzhou. However, perceptions of Marco Polo in China are not uniform: some exaggerated or fictionalized accounts in his travel notes and the lack of concrete evidence for his journey have led to doubts about the authenticity of his visit and the belief that his influence and contributions to China may have been overstated. Some even argue that Marco

Polo's representation of China indirectly encouraged Western powers to invade the country. These differing perspectives highlight the complexity of Marco Polo's legacy, demonstrating how his figure is subject to diverse and sometimes controversial interpretations.

Chinese academic research on Marco Polo began in the early 20th century, significantly later than in Italy and other European countries. Over the past century, Chinese scholars specializing in Marco Polo have made substantial contributions to the field, enriching it with numerous high-quality academic publications. Despite these advances, Chinese studies on Marco Polo display a certain lack of systematicity and comprehensiveness. Research has predominantly focused on bibliographic and textual analysis of his travel notes, often neglecting comparisons with contemporary international research. To date, no exhaustive analysis has been conducted on the evolution of Marco Polo's reception and dissemination in China, despite his significant cultural impact. As a widely recognized figure among the Chinese people, Marco Polo's image has evolved and expanded through different historical periods. However, this topic, which holds great interest and relevance, has not yet received sufficient attention from the academic community. This study aims to explore and address this gap, contributing to a more comprehensive and detailed understanding of the impact of Marco Polo's figure and works on Chinese culture.

This dissertation employs Lasswell's 5W Model of Communication to examine the five fundamental elements of communication—Sender, Message, Medium, Receiver, and Effect—and applies this framework to the historical analysis of Marco Polo's reception and dissemination in China. By incorporating Hans Robert Jauss's concept of the Reader's Horizon of Expectations, as presented in his Reception Theory, the study investigates the close relationship between interpretations of Marco Polo in China and the expectations of the Chinese audience in various social, historical, and cultural contexts over different periods. Using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, such as surveys and content analysis, the study interprets Marco Polo's role as a cultural symbol in the post-1949 era of the People's Republic of China. This research aspires to provide a systematic and in-depth presentation of the history of Marco Polo's reception and dissemination in China, a subject that has so far been marginally explored both in China and internationally, with limited research results. The primary objective is to analyze, from a historical perspective, the dynamics that have made Marco Polo a prominent figure in the Chinese context and how he has progressively been celebrated as a "good friend of the Chinese people." This research aims to inspire interest and critical evaluation among Marco Polo specialists and communication scholars. Throughout the study, Chinese sources and textual materials have been collected and systematized, including articles on Marco Polo published in major newspapers from the late Qing dynasty to the Republic of China (1911–1949), all mentions of "Marco Polo" in the official publication "People's Daily" ("Renmin Ribao" 人民日报) from 1948 to 2023, and data obtained from over 1,000 survey responses. It is hoped that these materials, once systematically organized and translated, will form a valuable and detailed database for future research and studies on Marco Polo, both in China and in Italy.

Ye, Yitong

*Explaining the variation of climate policy ambition across countries* 

University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK, July 2024

Supervisors: Neil Munro and Bernhard Reinsberg

Keywords: climate policy, climate change, China, United States

Abstract:

Focusing on the differences in climate policy outputs of countries, I seek to develop a measure of climate ambition at the state level, and to understand its drivers. Because of the challenges brought by conceptual divergence, cross-national measurements, and methodological limitations, a comprehensive measure of ambition is still lacking in the field of comparative climate policy studies. The research therefore develops a new measure and validates it by examining the variation in climate policy ambition across countries.

The new index, which I call the Climate Policy Ambition Index (CPAI) measures climate ambition in terms of both depth and breadth of climate policy outputs, which provides a theoretical foundation for operationalising comparisons of ambition. To validate the index, I construct a comparative dataset covering 35 countries from 1990 to 2020. The index summarises complex policy information into a single measure level, which allows us to study relevant determinants and also contributes new data to comparative climate policy studies. Through a newly developed pluralistic method, it demonstrates that use of the measure produces robust findings. Combined with analyses of important outlier cases, the analysis provides a relatively complete picture of what determines climate policy ambition.

I aim to contribute to the comparative climate policy studies in four aspects. First, it provides an output perspective to interpret the multifaced nature of climate ambition, thereby expanding the avenues for comparing levels of ambition across different frameworks. Second, the CPAI provides valuable panel data for future comparative studies. Third, it develops and applies a novel method to evaluate theoretical expectations about determinants of climate ambition, which stands in contrast to solely case-oriented studies, results of which often depend on case selection. Finally, in seeking to explain the cross-national variations of ambition, it delineates potential strategies for enhancing average ambition levels, which could be a useful tool for policymakers.

Yu, Minlin 

*The male lens on Jane Eyre: Translating/Constructing femininity across a century of Chinese cultural history*

University of Glasgow, United Kingdom, July 2024

Supervisors: Penelope Morris, Hongling Liang and Susan Bassnett

**Keywords:** femininity in translation, gender roles and identities in China, translation as cultural negotiation, translation bias


**Abstract:**

The early 20th to the early 21st century marked fundamental changes in gender roles and identities as Chinese women journeyed from the rigours of Confucian orthodoxy to personal sovereignty, from the shadows of ignorance towards enlightenment. This transition, far from linear, was defined by ongoing rounds of dialogue and deliberation. Standing at the forefront of these negotiations are Chinese male intellectuals and translators, who, historically positioned as importers and gatekeepers of Western feminist discourses, have participated in shaping gender ideologies in China.

This PhD thesis presents a compelling case into cross-border travels of gender and feminist discourses from the West to the East. It explores how “progressive” male translators adapt women’s literature to the specificities of the Chinese cultural context. It focuses on the representation of femininity in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* through the lens of three male translators across a century: Wu Guangjian’s early translation (1935), Song Zhaolin’s most reprinted version (1996), and the contemporary rendition by controversial translator Li Jihong (2019). The three male translators stand out for their feminist leanings in the prefaces to *Jane Eyre*. The study quantitatively and qualitatively examines cultural terms and expressions with gender implications across five dimensions of women’s lives: marriage and marital status, morality and ethical norms, education and societal roles, and beauty aesthetics. These aspects were examined within broader cultural history, an arena of contestation where Confucian traditions, contemporary norms and gender empowerment trends interact in push-and-pull dynamics, all vying for translators’ attention.

Anchored in the Cultural Turn in Translation Studies, the research analyses how translators engage with these socio-cultural dynamics, noting their linguistic alignment with specific cultural undercurrents while marginalising others. Consciously or unconsciously, translators act as cultural architects, constructing and consolidating ideals of femininity. Their roles alternate as marriage proponents, moral custodians, education advocates, beauty consumers and body guardians, advancing feminist empowerment in certain respects while upholding patriarchal traditions in others. Translation becomes a site of cultural negotiation, where Western gender discourses are reinterpreted, reshaped, and sometimes diluted to fit or challenge Chinese cultural norms and values. Translators, in their professional capacity, resemble the protective camouflage of a chameleon, adjusting their linguistic colouration in response to the cultural agendas, yet underpinning every interaction with a consistent core of patriarchal biases. This study both acknowledges and problematises the transformative power of translation in constructing gender identities.

Zeng, Yi 

*Navigating Face in the Digital Age: Power Dynamics and Subjectivity in Chinese Social Media* 

Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, University of Liverpool, China and UK, March 2024


Supervisors: Pawel Zygodlo, David S. G. Goodman and Angela Becher

**Keywords:** Face (lian, mianzi), facework, social norms, digital culture, interactional power, subjectivity and resistance, social dynamics

**Abstract:**

Recent scholarship convincingly demonstrates that the cultural phenomenon of “face” (脸/面子, lian or mianzi) has played a central role in shaping communication and social interactions in China for centuries. Despite the ongoing modernisation of Chinese society and the rise of social media, face seems not to lose its contemporary significance. The main objective of this thesis is to explore the concept of face and facework from both universal and culturally specific dimensions, analysing its impact on the formation of online identities, social relationships, and the broader power structures in Chinese virtual communities. Through a combination of semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis of social media practices, the thesis reveals the enduring influence of face across various demographic groups online. While social media has introduced superficial changes to the expressions and practical patterns related to face and facework, the core significance of face framework remains deeply connected to offline social experiences. Furthermore, the findings highlight the underlying power dynamics and socio-cultural importance of face, which continue to be closely tied to offline social norms. Adopting a multidisciplinary approach that integrates sociocultural theories, philosophy, and communication studies, this research introduces the “dispositif” framework to further interpret digital face practices and their social function. It emphasises the role of power dynamics, subjectivity, and resistance. The findings show how face adapts to the digital landscape, illustrating its profound interplay with the evolving culture of social media and its continued relevance in shaping social dynamics in contemporary China. Ultimately, this thesis demonstrates that face, along with facework, continues to function as a framework for navigating both social expectations and individual agency in China’s rapidly changing digital environment.

Zhang, Jiahua

*Time Travel (chuanyue) Romances in Chinese Cyberspace* 

University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom, May 2024

Supervisors: Xuelei Huang and Christopher Rosenmeier

Keywords: Cultural studies; Chinese studies, Time travel romance, Chinese online novel, the hidden

Abstract:

The recent few decades have witnessed a boom of online literature in mainland China. This thesis explores the subgenre of time travel (chuanyue) romance, a most celebrated category of Chinese online fiction that emerged in the mid-2000s. By analysing a selected corpus of time travel romances and the internet-based fan communities developed around them, this thesis probes how the desires and anxieties of their predominantly female readership find expressions in these works and how a microcosm of contemporary Chinese society unfolds in these worlds of fantasy. While the (female) protagonists may time travel to China's imperial past, to the Sino-Japanese war, to a dystopian future, or to an imaginary Otherland, the stories are deeply anchored in the complex political and social landscapes of contemporary China. Taking the dual role of what Henry Jenkins called "aca-fan" (both an academic and a fan), I inquire into this rich archive of imaginations, uncovering the themes of feminist consciousness, queerness, social mobility, nationalism, developmentalism, and posthumanism. My central argument is that web time travel romances make "hidden" aspects of contemporary Chinese society visible. The "hidden" refers not only to "serious" social issues which are often neglected in presumably "frivolous" romantic tales, but also to realms beyond ordinary perceptions, such as online games and imagined books. The time travel genre permits female netizens to transcend their real-life experiences, posing serious challenges to social norms, discipline, and hegemonic power. By constructing emancipatory female subjects, fans have also created and advanced their desired and idealized selves, traversing heteropatriarchy, the western-centric global order, and the anthropocentric framework.

Zhuang, Jixi

*Paradiplomatie et diplomatie partisane franco-chinoise en contexte de Guerre froide (1949-1964): configuration, réalité et limites*

[Paradiplomacy and Franco-Chinese partisan diplomacy in the context of the Cold War (1949-1964): configuration, reality and limits]

Université de Strasbourg, France, December 2023

Supervisor: Emmanuel Droit

Keywords: paradiplomacy, friendship diplomacy, Franco-Chinese relations, communist party, Cold War, cultural history

Abstract:

France's diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic of China in January 1964 is a classic subject in the contemporary history of international relations. Yet in the fifteen years between the founding of New China and the establishment of diplomatic relations with France, the impact of para-diplomatic and partisan exchanges has rarely been addressed.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the configuration and density of these infra-political, unofficial and non-statocentric exchanges, and their impact on Franco-Chinese rapprochement, particularly in the context of the Cold War, when the diplomacy of sovereign states was initially strongly imbricated in campist logics. The interest and originality of this thesis is to trace, from a perspective of "equal parts history", what existed outside or alongside the framework of diplomacy in Franco-Chinese relations, and to reveal the role of the partisan actors involved, as well as their networks. This Franco-Chinese para-diplomacy developed on several levels - partisan diplomacy, cultural diplomacy - intersecting with parallel logics of parliamentary or economic diplomacy. The thesis drew on a rich and varied corpus of French and Chinese archives, ranging from diplomatic and private collections to the archives of the PCF and its mass organizations. In particular, a large number of personal recollections of Chinese para-diplomatic actors were collected to compensate for the impossibility of accessing Chinese archives and to fill in information gaps on middle-ranking personalities in transnational contacts. Ultimately, the thesis offers not only a complementary perspective to Franco-Chinese diplomatic history, from the cross-views that the actors take of each other, but also contributions to several fields of study in France, such as the history of international relations, cultural history and Chinese studies.