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Beyond Chinese Studies: Where Chinese History Sits—and Why This Matters

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This essay examines the location of Chinese history in Europe from organizational and disciplinary perspectives and analyzes how this positioning has shaped the field's operation and reach. It addresses the question of where Chinese history is situated in Europe through a historical analysis of the past forty years (1985–2025) and, on this basis, develops recommendations for its future positioning for researchers and students in Sinology, Chinese Studies, China Studies, and history departments, as well as across the humanities and social sciences more broadly. Starting from the organizational and disciplinary configurations of European academic landscapes, the essay explains how these arrangements have influenced historical research on Sinophone societies and the teaching of Chinese history at European universities. It begins with a critical appraisal of the current placement of Chinese history—encompassing both pre-nineteenth-century and modern periods—across different departmental and programmatic settings. These are theorized as two models: place- or language-based positioning within area studies programmes, and period- or process-based placement within history departments. The essay evaluates the core claims associated with each model, including assertions of interdisciplinarity, transregional scope, and critical theory in area studies, and of historical methodology, global connectivity, and cross-regional comparison in history departments. It concludes by reflecting on how these forms of organizational and disciplinary positioning affect the academic visibility and public relevance of Chinese history.

本文從建制與學科的雙重視角，探討中國歷史在歐洲學界的定位，系統梳理 1985 至 2025 年間其高校院系歸屬與學科專業設置的演變脈絡。重點剖析區域研究模式與歷史學系模式各自的理論取向與學術訴求，並反思此種定位如何形塑中國史的研究實踐、教學形態、學術可見度及公共意義。在此基礎上，文章就未來數十年中國歷史在歐洲人文社會科學中的發展方向提出建言。

Keywords: area studies, Sinology, Chinese history, methodological nationalism, interdisciplinarity

關鍵詞： 區域研究，漢學，中國歷史，方法論民族主義，跨學科性

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Introduction

This essay examines the organizational and disciplinary location of Chinese history in Europe and analyzes how this positioning has shaped the field's operation and reach. Focusing on European academic landscapes, it explains how institutional and disciplinary arrangements have influenced historical research on Sinophone societies and the teaching of Chinese history at European universities. The question of where Chinese history is located in Europe is addressed through a historical analysis of the past forty years (1985–2025). On this basis, the essay develops recommendations for the future positioning of Chinese history for researchers and students in Sinology, Chinese Studies, China Studies, and history departments, as well as across the humanities and social sciences more broadly.

Concerns about the location of Chinese history in academia are not new (Zurndorfer 2017; Blue 2017). When one reads through any of the hefty tomes on Sinology, Chinese Studies, or more broadly Asian Studies that occupy the first few shelves that one will see upon entering East Asian Studies academic library stacks (especially those that have been organized according to the Harvard-Yenching system), one will likely encounter occasional commentary on Chinese history's lack of independence from Sinology and area studies, or on history departments' neglect of it. Some sound more caustic and bitter than others, but there is a shared sentiment across the last three generations of historians working on different periods of Chinese history that things don't sit well. For example, in the early post-WWII decades, the celebrated historian Étienne Balazs (1905–1963) who worked on medieval socio-economic and administrative history expressed unease with the limitations imposed on Chinese history by Sinological conventions and routines (Bastid-Bruguière 1995, 237). In the early 1990s, Hans Bielenstein (1920–2015), an authority on early imperial Chinese history, was even more outspoken about the general lack of training in historical methodology among students and scholars of Chinese history: "many European sinologists, as already stated, not only lack historical training but in all too many cases are not aware of this deficiency" (Bielenstein 1995, 241). More recently, modern historians like Christian Henriot (2020) and students of Chinese history like Adam Knight (2025) have issued calls to expand the presence of Chinese history in national academia and in secondary education. Nowadays this is done in public media rather than in obscure journals and hefty tomes with small print runs.

The location of Chinese history within academia, or, more accurately, the position of historians working on the history of Sinophone societies, has changed since the days of Balazs and Bielenstein. Whereas in the 1980s and 1990s Chinese history was still as a rule taught only in Chinese or other area studies units in Europe, by the 2020s Chinese history and historians specializing in it have also been included in the teaching and research of history departments. This essay takes stock of this trend and the duality in the location of Chinese history in European academia we see today. It begins with a critical appraisal of the current

placement of Chinese history—encompassing both the pre-nineteenth-century and modern periods—across different departmental and programmatic settings, theorized as two models: place- or language-based positioning within area studies programmes, and period- or process-based placement within history departments. I critically evaluate core claims made for both models, including claims surrounding the cross- and interdisciplinary, transregional, and critical theoretical nature of area studies anchored in a focus on place outside Europe, on one hand, and claims of historical methodology, global connections, and cross-regional comparative thinking anchored in temporal processes and thematic organization, on the other.

The matter of where Chinese history is is an urgent question in higher education and under the present geopolitical conditions. The question is posed here at a paradoxical moment in the history of Chinese history within European higher education: sharply declining enrolments in many universities in Chinese Studies and similar BA and MA programmes on one hand, and unprecedented interest in China-related courses, including Chinese history, among students enrolled in other programmes and departments, on the other. The essay therefore ends with reflections on the impact of organizational and disciplinary situatedness on the reach of Chinese history in terms of both academic visibility and public relevance. These reflections are offered as recommendations to position Chinese history within the humanities and social sciences at large more effectively and with greater regard for the autonomy of historians specializing in it.

Chinese History in Chinese Studies and the Limits of Area Studies Insularity

In 1995 Marianne Bastid-Bruguière observed that, after WWII, in line with the professionalization of history and in accordance with changing perceptions of Europe's role in the world, the position of Chinese history in academia began to change. Whereas it had long been difficult to consider Chinese history separately from Sinology (defined primarily as the study of language and literature, textual culture and to some extent visual and material culture), after WWII Chinese history emerged as a field with dedicated practitioners. In her estimation, Chinese history then began to function as a subfield of Sinology, not divorced from the latter field, but distinguished from other subfields under its umbrella such as the study of Chinese language or Chinese literature. Bastid-Bruguière saw the strong connection between the emerging subfield of Chinese history with Sinology as a fortunate situation, underscoring the need for in-depth language and text-analysis training for historians working on Sinophone societies (1995, 228).

In the 1980s and in the decades following the publication of Bastid-Bruguière's analysis, further changes took place both within Sinology or Chinese Studies and in Chinese history. First, for some, Sinology (and the Oriental Studies research units of which Sinology subdivisions were often part) had come to be equated with philology and traditional approaches to the remote past, and hence Sinology departments were gradually renamed Chinese or China Studies. Humanities researchers who had been at the core of Sinology departments were joined by researchers focusing their work on modern or contemporary China and teaching in areas such as economics, political economy, international relations, political science, sociology, anthropology, media studies, law, or business administration that are, when the research object is located in Europe or more broadly the West, housed in social science and professional faculties.

Second, in some parts of Western Europe the reform of Sinology subdivisions was accompanied by broader transformations in higher education, including the democratization of universities and thus rapidly expanding student numbers, and, more recently, the spread of a neoliberal management culture in which research, teaching, administration, and service have become increasingly subject to bureaucratic accounting, market-driven task descriptions and personnel assessment, and the entrepreneurial adventurism of self-styled university "leadership" (Collini 2012; 2017; Lorenz 2012).

Third, the transformations of the People's Republic of China since the late 1970s and the ways in which these have been reported on in European media have of course also been factors affecting the position of Chinese Studies and Chinese history in higher education, with record numbers enrolling in Chinese Studies in the mid-1980s followed by significant decline after 1989 and generally low enrolments in West European, American, Australian, and Japanese Chinese Studies programmes in the last two decades. Whereas most such programmes could count on large numbers of college students wishing to study Chinese language and various aspects of Chinese society around 1985, in 2025 enrolment in Chinese Studies was generally far below comparable programmes such as Japanese Studies and, sometimes, even Korean Studies. Even though significantly fewer students now envision dedicating years of their life to the study of Chinese society, significantly more are propelled by the position of China in the international order to enrol in courses on China—a demand that newer programmes in International Studies and Global studies have struggled to satisfy.

Fourth, and critical for an understanding of the present-day position of Chinese history within Chinese Studies, and more broadly history within area studies, is the definition of area studies in the places where it is practised. Despite a thriving critical literature about area and regional studies and their relations to other fields, this is not as straightforward as it may sound. In practice Area Studies is often understood to be self-explanatory; unlike the humanities and social science disciplines that were like Sinology formed in the nineteenth century, theory, methodology, and the history of the field are typically not explicitly and systematically

embedded in BA and MA curricula. We can get a sense of self-understanding and self-positioning during moments of crisis when the need to identify expectations and conventions is clearly pronounced. In the early 2010s, following major faculty-wide restructuring and responding to internal and external critiques, the Leiden Institute for Area Studies identified Area Studies as a field characterized by multi- and interdisciplinarity and animated by the need to respond to Eurocentric theory emanating from humanities and social science disciplines (van Crevel 2014). Following critiques of the imperialist and colonial origins of the area studies model, as well as the methodological nationalism of subfields such as China, Japan, or Korea Studies, Area Studies was, despite its anchoring in specific places and languages, reimagined as transregional and global. The mission statement crafted by the management was not only targeted at area studies researchers but also embedded in a mandatory undergraduate core course for students enrolled in any of its programmes, taught by researchers from widely diverging but usually smaller fields such as Assyriology and Egyptology.

What has the impact of these changes been on Chinese history teaching and research in Chinese Studies? More specifically, in what ways has its embedding within reformed Chinese Studies programmes shaped historical research and teaching? Below I approach this question from multiple angles, including staffing and teaching portfolios (how many historians are there and what do they teach?), as well as research and professional orientation. My observations are limited by my own experiences and exchanges, having taught in Chinese Studies for 14 years and history departments for 11 years in public and private research universities in Belgium, the Netherlands, the UK, and the US.

On the whole, the amount of Chinese history positions has not significantly increased within reformed and expanded Chinese Studies programmes; in some the trend has clearly been negative, with expansion into social science fields coming to some extent at the cost of history and other humanities positions. This is more strongly the case for pre-nineteenth-century history than for modern history. Whereas at Leiden Chinese Studies could in the 1980s and 1990s boast expertise in imperial economic, social, religious, maritime, and contemporary political and migration history as well as early Chinese thought and imperial literary and cultural history, by the early 2010s this had been reduced to one position for Chinese history in general, with one position in modern history added later on.

The impact of area studies reform and neoliberal management on teaching portfolios has been more strongly pronounced. Even in cases in which job titles in Chinese Studies departments in the UK or the Netherlands clearly indicated history as the disciplinary field, course loads and course contents expanded far beyond what had been expected even in traditional Sinology departments within which a certain amount of flexibility to teach across fields had not been unusual. To take my own case, at Oxford I was as Associate Professor in Chinese History asked to teach and examine in early Chinese palaeography, art history,

classical Chinese language, modern Chinese language, sociology, political science, anthropology, literature, philosophy, and linguistics. In Leiden unexpectedly high numbers of students enrolling in International Studies led for years to extra courses and BA and MA thesis classes in fields including modern Korean and Japanese cultural studies and evaluation of BA and MA research in political science, media studies, linguistics, philosophy, religious studies, and modern literature, film, and international relations. In this manner, so-called multi- and interdisciplinarity were not realities that emerged from research practice, but rather extra-contractual demands imposed by the uncontrolled and poorly managed expansion of new programmes. Such demands resulted in unevenness in the quality of course content and delivery as well as unusually high staff rotation.

Did the emphasis on multi- and interdisciplinarity and global studies in institutional mission statements lead to a new academic habitus and foster greater integration of the various subdivisions within area and particularly Asian Studies? If we are to go by participation in China Studies seminars and the quantity of interdisciplinary research projects and publications, there is little to suggest that area studies are at the forefront of interdisciplinarity. I would go so far as to suggest that the claim of the de facto multi- and interdisciplinary nature of area studies has become increasingly less valid, that this has become the stuff of myth rather than lived reality. Interdisciplinarity exists mainly in managerial rhetoric.

There are several reasons for this. First, multi- and interdisciplinarity presuppose disciplinarity. In all subdivisions of area studies disciplinary training is sparse to non-existent. In Chinese history it is up to one or two historians to embed disciplinary training into the small number of history courses that they teach to Chinese Studies undergraduates in the second and third year of the BA. No disciplinary training is typically required for MA students enrolling in Asian Studies programmes; and at this level too it is largely left to individual staff to devise theoretical and methodological training in the sole history course that they may teach at this level—if they are lucky. Cuts have led to graduate teaching in fields such as imperial Chinese history disappearing entirely when staff go on temporary research leave; in this way MA courses on premodern Chinese history disappeared entirely in the Netherlands between 2014 and 2022. In addition, mandatory courses for research skills in Sinology that used to be the international claim to fame of European Sinology departments have long disappeared from undergraduate and graduate curricula in several universities due to the lack of personnel to staff such sessions. Neoliberal management by student credit accounting has, most likely as an unintended consequence if we take management speak about interdisciplinarity seriously, raised further obstacles to cross-departmental collaboration. Area Studies students are not encouraged to take disciplinary training (or other courses) in other departments, because student credits accrue to departments and therefore students' taking courses elsewhere has an immediate impact on future departmental budgets.

Second, ever-expanding output in Chinese Studies, increasing specialization, and the growing interest in including China-related expertise in humanities and social science disciplines following China's return as a key player on the global scene have changed the professional orientation of younger and to some extent senior researchers in the last two decades. China seminars mixing various humanities and social science disciplines are no longer the place where a shared professional identity is expressed; such events are across the board poorly attended and often serve as a reminder of how much the Sinologists of the past have grown apart. In other words, researchers placed within Chinese Studies or area studies departments are at this stage inclining to become more disciplinary rather than interdisciplinary. Political economists want in the first place to work with other political economists, and historians with other historians.

The limitations put on disciplinary academic exchange within area studies departments have consequences on multiple fronts. Among them is the practical limitation on enacting real impact on the disciplines. While the goal to produce theory not based on the European experience from which to talk back to the disciplines and Eurocentric theory is worthwhile, it has in my experience not been what area studies in the main produces. More importantly, it is very questionable whether such a goal can be best pursued in isolation from the disciplines. Dissatisfaction with Eurocentric theory and methodology is still one of the main shared attributes of area studies researchers, but at this point we need to consider whether theory and methodology informed by the experience of societies across the world and across time could not be better and more effectively produced through day-to-day exchange in discipline-specific departments or thematic groupings rather than in nation- or national language-based area studies in isolation. In history at least it appears that the most impactful research, think of Kenneth Pomeranz' *The Great Divergence* (2000), has been undertaken by those with a firm footing in history.

Finally, and as the example of Pomeranz illustrates, talking back to the disciplines implies that one has to be able to speak beyond the Chinese nation. In spite of prominently featured aspirations to go global or transregional on websites and in promotional literature, nation-based area studies programmes remain on average stuck in methodological nationalism (Beck 2007; Chernilo 2006; Dietze and Middell 2019; Szanton 2004). As I have explained elsewhere, in the case of Chinese Studies, the object has expanded from China to "Global China" (De Weerdt 2027); efforts to position China globally, that is in connective and comparative research, seldom feature in Chinese Studies and have at times been actively discouraged. Using my own experience as but one example, when working on the adaptation of medieval Sinitic political advice literature in eighteenth-century German political theory and state fiction I was cautioned during an annual review by an academic director that "German history is not part of your research duties as Chair Professor of Chinese History." I was able to finish this work aimed at showing how the translation and adaptation of Chinese

administrative technology shaped early modern and modern European administrative practice and political theory only after moving back to a history department, at KU Leuven (De Weerdt 2023; 2026).

Chinese History in History Departments and the Need for Radical Decolonization

During the last two decades it has become more common in Europe to find historians working on Sinophone societies in history departments. This is still the exception rather than the rule, and in this regard European history departments differ markedly from history departments in the United States of America. The latter have a long history of including the histories of places outside the USA and Europe within their course offerings. Public and private universities alike include courses on Chinese, East Asian, South Asian, African, South American, and world history among core electives and history departments regularly issue distribution requirements so that all history students take a small number of courses outside of their geographic areas and periods of specialization.

In the case of Western Europe, we have mainly seen history departments expand in Chinese history at universities without a well-established prior tradition of Sinology or Chinese Studies. In the UK, for example, Robert Bickers calculated that since the past two decades "33 out of 83 research active [history] departments" now include historians working on Sinophone societies; that is indeed substantial progress and this is most likely unmatched anywhere else in Europe (Bickers 2020). Universities such as Aberdeen, Birkbeck, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Exeter, King's College, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, LSE, Manchester, Newcastle, Royal Holloway, Southampton, Sussex, Warwick, and many more hired historians working on Chinese societies in history departments. Many of these were appointments in specifically Chinese history, but some were broader history searches in which a candidate with expertise in Chinese history was selected. This also implies that these are not necessarily lasting positions in Chinese history. One can only hope that this promising trend, mostly achieved within one decade, will not be undone by the restructuring that some of these universities have been facing in recent years. At universities with major East Asian or Chinese Studies departments such as Oxford, and at one point Durham, occasional appointments in history departments focused on modern Chinese history. That is also the case overall and very few history departments in the UK have made pre-seventeenth-century Chinese history part of their teaching of human history; a notable exception is the historian Naomi Standen, a medieval historian, who taught at both Newcastle and Birmingham. At Belgian universities Chinese history is mainly taught by staff in Chinese Studies, but in recent

years researchers in Chinese history have been hired in the history department of KU Leuven. In the Netherlands some universities made similar attempts, with Groningen, VU Amsterdam (Free University of Amsterdam), and Utrecht hiring in modern Chinese history, but here also the longevity of these positions has not been guaranteed. In the more centralized academy in France, the situation appears dire; there was "not a single recruitment of historians of modern China" in the two decades between 1999 and 2018 (Henriot 2020).

Despite the small steps taken in the UK and elsewhere, there is overall agreement that much more remains to be done to embed Chinese history as well as the history of other Asian, African, and American societies into history departments in Europe. The sense of urgency expressed by historians reviewing the field has become keener as it is felt that history departments are no longer preparing their students well for the world in which they find themselves and the challenges and opportunities they will face upon graduation.

History departments have during the past two decades not gone through the more drastic reforms that some area studies departments have experienced, but some of the critiques and challenges to which they have had to respond are similar. History departments have been facing calls from younger generations of researchers and students to decolonize and diversify, to cover a broader range of human experience from a broader range of human actors, to include global connective and comparative approaches, and, considering ongoing debates on eurocentrism, to place greater emphasis on non-European archives and voices. Revamped mission statements have typically included claims about global and transnational coverage, especially in early modern, modern, and contemporary history. As quantitative trends in positions have already been sketched above, the discussion focuses on the teaching portfolios, research orientation, and professional development of historians of Chinese societies who have worked for at least some years in history departments.

Academics working on Chinese history teaching in history departments often teach more than only Chinese history. In addition to national or regional (East Asian or Asian) history survey courses, they are often involved in world or global history courses and can offer methodological and thematic courses using historiographies on different societies. While teaching in history departments at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville (US), King's College London (UK), and KU Leuven (Belgium) I taught and co-taught general historiography courses, Chinese history surveys, Chinese intellectual history, world history and medieval history surveys, the history of intercultural relations, Sino-European relations, and thematic and comparative courses on authority, socialization, and material infrastructures. Since I was not trained as a historian, these experiences and regular exchanges with colleagues in the history departments where I worked shaped the work I have been doing, both in research and teaching, with a body of connective and comparative work slowly emerging as a result. The work of many of the historians listed in Bickers' overview

similarly suggests how becoming part of a history department shapes and amplifies the work of academics working on Chinese history.

More importantly, such exchanges normalize the inclusion of Chinese history in the perspectives of researchers and students whose interests predominantly lie in other areas. I was fortunate early on in my teaching career to experience just what an impact this can have on history students who had not anticipated learning about Chinese history. In 2003 a student training as an officer in the US Army made, after all grades had been submitted, the only appointment he made all semester simply to share that "had I been alive before 1600 I would have wanted to live in China." Sentiment apart, this opportunity to learn about not only Chinese history but the history of other places through implicit comparison is currently still scarcely available to most history students in Europe.

Conversely, in history departments where the step to include historians associated with area studies has either intentionally or unintentionally not been made, claims about global coverage and attempts to counter colonialist historical narratives still mostly proceed through a critical engagement with colonial archives. For example, important work is done in the Netherlands in questioning the celebratory rhetoric of prior work on the "Golden Age," but this is still mostly carried out through work on the East Indian Company archives with practically no attention to local Asian, African, and American histories before the sixteenth century. From the perspective of a historian trained in an area studies environment one would expect decolonization to start with, or at least to incorporate, the longue-durée histories of the world colonized by European (and other) powers prior to colonization and with local archives and sources in local languages. Similarly, comparative work or global history survey courses are in such history departments more often undertaken by European historians and even with the best of intentions tend to result in the confirmation of Eurocentric bias rather than in its questioning through current research on Chinese and other regional histories.

For historians of Chinese societies working in history departments there are also the kinds of challenges that newcomers and minorities are bound to face. Among them, fixed periodizations and predefined content for theoretical and methodological courses likely present the greatest challenges in research and teaching. First, periodization continues to pose a major problem for many historians working on extra-European histories. One might prefer to bracket this issue, but given that many history departments are subdivided into working groups based on period this is all but impossible. Medieval and early modern are not periodizations that are readily accepted by historians of China who often see them as Eurocentric constructs. As I have suggested elsewhere, it is up to historians working on Chinese and other parts of the world to question such constructs and contribute to debates about the temporal structuring of history at various scales; such discussions are no less

relevant to how periodization works in Chinese history and public discourse (De Weerdt 2025).

Second, leaving aside the occasional flippant remark that history has no method, a cursory glance at history department curricula will show that historical and other methods are very much part of the training they offer. Source criticism is at the core of history training and critical data evaluation skills have become all the more important in the age of artificial intelligence. These courses, their textbooks and lab sessions, typically revolve around archives in European languages. Here it is obvious, as Bastid-Bruguière remarked, that for the training of historians whose primary focus will be on research in Chinese history, collaboration with Chinese Studies programmes remains critically important. Such collaboration should also pay off for Chinese Studies programmes and could result in the expansion of the training that is currently the preserve of graduate students in Chinese Studies with an interest in history. In my own experience in Chinese Studies programmes, substantial effort is devoted to text reading and translation; much research is devoted but also limited to explaining the text. Including expanded training in source and archival criticism in addition to a broad range of ancillary analogue and digital methodologies stands to benefit the further development of Chinese history, both within Chinese Studies and in history more broadly.

Conclusions

I have shown that we have seen an important shift in the last two decades in the history of Chinese history in Europe. Chinese history had already become a subfield in Chinese Studies or Sinology in the twentieth century as some Sinologists became full-time professional historians. In the last two decades historians of Sinophone societies joined history departments in unprecedented numbers, especially in the UK and sporadically in other European countries. The rich literature in various European and East Asian languages surveying the field of Chinese Studies in Europe has described trends in publications and includes biographical accounts of key figures and research organizations (e.g., Fogel 2023; Idema 2014; Łuszczykiewicz and Brose 2022; Schütte 2002; Singaravélou 1999; Zurndorfer 2017; and issues and histories of "International Sinology" [*Guoji Hanxue* 國際漢學] in Chinese as well as voluminous Chinese monographs and articles on national traditions of Sinology in Europe). These have not regularly treated Chinese history as a separate field of research (e.g. Idema 2014 or Martin and Hammer 1999). Moreover, to my knowledge, this work has so far not considered the impact of the location of historians working on Chinese societies within different academic environments on research and teaching.

I have outlined two models, evaluated the claims for them, and highlighted the affordances of each. Historians of Sinophone societies working in history departments can focus on historical research and contribute to a more rounded formation of history students, both in their own courses and through their interactions with other historians. Can decolonization and an understanding of the effects of colonization and imperialism really proceed without the inclusion of historians working on the histories of societies before European colonization took off, with local sources and in local languages? The inclusion of historians working on Chinese and other parts of the world may require gradual change within history departments and, as with training in historical research on periods and places with special linguistic requirements, also requires collaboration with Chinese Studies programmes focused on language and text analytical training. Historians are accustomed to the notion that change can take time, but, as the case of the UK shows, significant positive change can be realized within a decade. Where Chinese history remains in Chinese Studies, collaboration in research and teaching with disciplines such as history ought to be actively encouraged, facilitated, and institutionalized, and not, as is still too often the case, seen as a threat or breach of loyalty. Furthermore, if staff wellbeing truly is to be seen as genuine care and not another imposition by neoliberal university leadership, wild expectations of multi- and interdisciplinarity are best tempered.

In 2014, and in view of the fact that it turned out to be impossible to find three historians for a BBC radio show to discuss the so-called first industrial revolution in Song China, I expressed the hope that "the histories of non-European places" be "fully incorporated in universities and schools at all levels" (De Weerdt 2014, 12). Ten years later, I'd like to express the additional hope that we start calling historians of Sinophone societies by their profession. After the "Sinologist" made a more regular appearance in the early twentieth century (the "Sinologue" was more common before if we go by google N-grams), the term stuck to the extent that I and other historians working on Chinese history are commonly referred to in academic events and the media as "Sinologists" even when job titles do not include the latter term and even when we explicitly introduce ourselves as historians. It matters to academic as well as public discourse that Chinese history is, just as the history of all other societies known to us, made an equal part of history; the substitution of "Sinologist" for historian to me connotes that on the whole the Chinese past is singled out for different treatment and exoticism, at a remove from the history of European societies. As the Chinese past has become in China and in global media a very productive site, and as Chinese history in the Sinophone world has become equally professionalized (Moloughney and Zarrow 2011), it has become ever more important for historians (and not just any "China expert") to weigh in on academic, policy, and public debate on the representation and uses of the Chinese past. And that implies that only modern history amounting to a story of the rise of China following a century of shame will not do.

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