**BACS 2023 Conference, King’s College London, 7&8 September.**

INDIVIDUAL PAPER ABSTRACTS

(In alphabetical order by author family name)

ABRAM, Tom (The London School of Economics and Political Science)

*“The Failing Politician”: Tsai Ing-wen in the Eyes of China’s State Media*

Controlling discourses on Taiwan is at the forefront of the People’s Republic of China’s propaganda efforts. During the Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian presidencies of the Republic of China (Taiwan), virulent discourses within PRC’s state media emerged as a manifestation of Chinese Communist Party’s ire with those it frames as separatists. Similarly, the election of Tsai Ing-wen in 2016 opened a new era of conflicting cross-strait relations. Against the background of the PRC’s growing assertiveness under Xi Jinping, the return of the Democratic Progressist Party to power in Taiwan, and antagonistic US-China relations, how does the PRC’s state media portray Tsai Ing-wen and what does it reveal about its discursive practices over Taiwan? This paper operates a Critical Discourse Analysis of four state media outlets between Nancy Pelosi’s meeting with Tsai in August 2022, and Tsai’s visit to the U.S. in March 2023 that sparked vitriolic reactions from the PRC. It contends that both domestic and English-language media have a homogenous vituperative discourse on Tsai Ing-wen. Emphasis is put on Tsai’s deleterious policies that spawn a series of crisis; scandals; criminal intentions; authoritarianism; and pro-Japan “de-Sinicization”. Through the lens of *discursive hegemony* theory, it goes on to argue that the party-state seeks to achieve hegemony over discourses on Taiwan through reproduction of government’s stances, persuasion efforts, and deceptive deployment of information. Beyond documenting CCP’s rhetoric on Taiwan, these findings shed light on the state of cross-strait relations under Xi and Tsai, and exhibit the importance of *discursive hegemony* and the ‘Taiwan issue’ for the CCP legitimacy.

AGGARWAL, Shikha (National Chengchi University)

*Emerging Contours of CCP’s Cadre Management System under Xi Jinping*

The evolution of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from a revolutionary force to China’s governing entity has been a gradual process enabled by a meticulous and robust cadre management system. Moreover, the cadre management system is often regarded as the primary factor that has contributed to the resilience of the CCP, and its emergence as the most successful experiment of the Marxist paradigm. However, under Xi Jinping, the cadre management system has come under extreme stress. As against the education and performance-based criteria for recruitment and promotion of the cadre introduced since 1980s, the new cadre management system lays emphasis upon non-quantifiable variables such as ‘political standard’, ‘cultural construction’, ‘Party construction’ etc. The absence of an objective criterion for the evaluation of the cadres has strengthened the Party’s discretionary powers, and thereby its centralised control over the appointment and recruitment process. Furthermore, the age-based criteria that governed the promotion and retirement of the cadre has been compromised. Also, the process of ‘exceptional promotions’ for the leading cadres has been dismantled. These developments have contributed to the rapid ‘ageing’ of the Party. While this picture holds true for the Party’s personnel make-up at the provincial and national levels, Xi Jinping has stressed upon the recruitment of younger and ‘exceptional talent’ at the county level.

The Paper proposes to study the evolution of cadre management system under Xi Jinping by analysing the authoritative Party documents pertaining to this area, and further supplement the study by analysing data from the provinces and counties.

ARNOŠTOVÁ, Monika (Universität Duisburg-Essen)

*Lying Flat across East Asia: Social Movements of disenchanted young professionals in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Japan*

Mainland China, Taiwan, and Japan are notoriously known for their culture of long working hours which was widely accepted by millennials and earlier generations but not as enthusiastically welcomed by Generation Z or younger millennials. Each of these three regions has specific job market conditions for young professionals and the protest actions and ways of refusal of dire working conditions also vary. Due to geographical and cultural vicinity, mainland China, Taiwan, and Japan demonstrate a certain degree of convergence and divergence. One of these convergencies is certainly the „lying flat“ (tǎng píng 躺平) movement which could be observed in certain shapes and modes in all three regions. For some young people in mainland China and Taiwan, it means using their own savings or parent’s resources to do nothing for a certain period of time, for others it could translate into doing part-time jobs or gigs only to earn the minimum to support their lifestyles. In Japan, the “satori generation“ (satori sedaiさとり世代) or the “resignation generation“ represents young people who have basically given up on any considerable material desires and hold pessimistic views about the future. Some of them do so by being an unemployed or underemployed “freeter“ (furītāフリーター), others choose to be the “Buddhist men“ (futsu danshi 仏男子) or in extreme cases „hikikomori“ (引きこもり).

Young people in mainland China, Taiwan, and Japan demonstrate shared disillusionment with the mainstream working culture and social expectations which eventually takes various forms of lying flat. The aim of this study is to explore such tendencies in further detail and provide insight into the convergencies and divergencies of these social movements across the three East-Asian societies.

BAI, Xue (Lancaster University)

*Do boycotts crowd out or expand conventional political participation in China? Political consumerism and political participation in an authoritarian context*

As the most common form of political consumerism, boycotts, i.e., refraining from buying certain products to push companies or governments to change undesired practices or policies, is a popular tool that Chinese citizens use to engage in politics. However, previous literature either focuses on the context of Western democracies or explores antecedents or economic effects of boycotts. Very little research investigates the relationship between boycotts and political participation in authoritarian regimes. This paper aims to explore whether boycotts crowd out or expand conventional political participation in authoritarian China. Through analysing the latest 7th wave of World Value Survey (China), I find that instead of crowding-out effects, boycotts have expanded the political participation repertoire in China. More specifically, the results indicate that increases in boycott behaviours significantly increase the probability of engaging in all listed contentious participatory actions, including *signing a petition*, *attending peaceful demonstrations*, *joining a strike*, *signing an electronic petition (online)*, and *organizing political activities and protests (online)*. However, the relationships between boycott behaviours and different institutionalized participatory actions are not homogeneous. On the one hand, partaking in boycotts increases the probability of *contacting government officials*. On the other hand, boycott behaviours have positive yet insignificant relations with both *voting in local level* and *party membership*. This study contributes to the understanding of the relationship between political consumerism and grassroots political participation in the authoritarian context.

BECHER, Angela (University of Liverpool)

 *Decolonising virtual reality: Of Sinofuturism and other tales*

This paper examines Sinophone media art that challenges dominant power structures and narratives in relation to the changes brought about by Virtual Reality (VR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI). An example is the work by British-Singaporean artist Lawrence Lek who is often, albeit probably incorrectly, credited with the coinage of the term ‘Sinofuturism’, which places China in the context of other ethnofuturisms, most notably that of Afrofuturism. Lek employs various media such as film, virtual reality, video games, and installations to reflect, among other things, on the narratives that are created around China in the Western popular discourse with regards to its technological developments, advances in artificial intelligence and its reputation as the ‘factory of the world’. This paper adopts a decolonial perspective in looking at artworks that merge technological aesthetics or ‘new’ media with socio-political commentary and which investigate the complex dynamics of power and identity in the face of the paradigmatic shifts in everyday life engendered by technology. The paper analyses Sinophone artworks that critically negotiate the risks and potential of human-machine interactions and which address China’s role as the emerging AI global superpower. It also looks at works which self-reflectively engage with the myriad biases embedded within the medium of VR itself while deploying these technologies for the imaginary of a more equitable future. This paper contributes to the exploration of Sinophone art as a voice for the centering of marginalized voices, cultures, and histories in light of new global technological paradigms.

BOGDANOVA, Olena (Lviv National Academy of Arts)

*Gender roles in Hmong (Miao) silversmithing: tradition and modern transformation.*

This article will explore the traditional gender roles in Hmong (Miao)  silversmithing and their transformation in modern society.

Gender roles have been an important aspect of the Hmong (Miao) silversmithing cultural tradition, dictating the roles men and women play in the production of silver jewellery, and the rules that govern to use of these items. However, in recent times, the influence of globalization, changes in the lifestyle of this ethnic group, and financial situation in their area have been altering these gender roles, leading to global changes.

In traditional Hmong (Miao) society, silversmithing was largely a male-dominated field, with men being given the responsibility of producing intricate and elaborate silver jewellery for the women in the community. As skilled artisans, they were highly valued and respected, and their work was considered an essential part of the Hmong (Miao) cultural identity. Women, on the other hand, were expected to play a more passive role in the production and use of these items, with their primary responsibility being to wear and display the jewellery made by men.

However, these gender roles are slowly changing as the Hmong (Miao) people engage more with the global community. Women are increasingly taking on leadership roles in silversmithing cooperatives, with some even establishing their businesses. They are also becoming more involved in the creative process, contributing new ideas and designs that challenge traditional views of what constitutes “proper” Hmong (Miao) silver jewellery.

The author offers an analysis of these changes and consequences for the unique traditional jewelry art of this ethnic group.

CAI, Keru (Penn State University)

*The Queer New Woman: From Russian “Superfluous Man” to Chinese “Superfluous Woman”*

Critics have identified the figure of the superfluous man in early twentieth-century Chinese literature, primarily associated with the writer Yu Dafu, whose texts such as the 1924 “The Superfluous Man” (*Lingyu zhe*) drew upon Russian precedents. A character type which in Russia encompassed Pushkin’s Evgeny Onegin, Lermontov’s Pechorin, Dostoevsky’s underground man, and Goncharov’s Oblomov, among many others, this misfit was given an official literary designation by Turgenev’s 1850 story “Diary of a Superfluous Man” (*Dnevnik lishnego cheloveka*). In the Russian tradition, this was a character type whose primary feature was alienation from himself and his environment, such that he was incapable of solving the problems plaguing the society around him, whether due to personal failings or governmental restraints.

In this paper, I argue that Ding Ling’s early fiction, particularly the 1928 “Miss Sophia’s Diary” (*Shafei nüshi de riji*), crystallized the character of the superfluous woman, which had permutations in the work of other women writers of the 1920s and 30s, as well as in other early texts by Ding Ling herself. I first demonstrate the intertextual resonances between “Miss Sophia’s Diary” and Turgenev's “Diary of a Superfluous Man” that give rise to Ding Ling’s permutation of superfluousness and strangeness (*guai*). I then illustrate how the qualities of superfluousness queer the new woman; and finally I contend that Ding Ling sharpens the feminist potential of the superfluous woman through intertextual engagement with Dostoevsky’s 1846 novel *Poor People* (*Bednye liudi*).

CHAN, Kar Yue (Hong Kong Metropolitan University)

*Epitomizing the Poignancy in Poetry and Cantonese Opera: “The Heartbreaking Poetry” of Zhu Shuzhen*

The notions of grief and poignancy are pervasive across the spectrum of classical Chinese literary tradition and in Chinese opera, which draws heavily on its literary counterpart. This phenomenon is due to the fact that tragic folk tales cause eternal grief in the minds of the public. Indeed, audiences tend to identify with the melancholy inherent in operatic genres, compounded by theatrical effects and other performance elements.

“The Heartbreaking Poetry” 斷腸詞 [*Duanchang ci*] by Zhu Shuzhen 朱淑真 (1135?–1180?), a Chinese poetess of the Song dynasty, clearly illustrates its author’s painful and poignant emotional transformation following an unsuitable choice of husband, a widespread idea hinted in her poems. Two Cantonese opera songs of the same title, “The Heartbreaking Poetry,” (a solo and a duet) and another titled “Tears upon Remnant Lamp Wax” 燈花淚 [*Denghua lei*], help to convey the tragic short life of the persona illustrated in these sources. Referring to the title of Zhu’s poetry collection, “The Heartbreaking Poetry,” an intimate relationship between the collection and the corresponding Cantonese opera songs is evident. In this context, the persona’s extremely poignant lament is reinforced by the delicate poetic features and specific arrangements of the operatic structure carried out by the multi-layered juxtaposition of the two genres. The respective translated versions from Chinese to English are included for comparison and discussion in this chapter, as to epitomize the relationship of the melancholic representations between the two genres.

CHELEGEER (Independent Scholar)

*Making and Remaking Chinese Citizenry: policies and programs toward different ethnic minorities in China*

There are two presumed images of today’s China widely spread around the world: The first one highlights China’s centralised politics, integrated socio-economic development and ideological control. It portrays that the entire Chinese population speaks the same Chinese language, has a uniform way of life, and celebrates Chinese nationalism. The second, on the contrary, is mosaic-like. It delineates the complex divisions of this extensive and populous country and underlines its official classification of 56 ethnic nationalities with respective cultural needs. Such stark contrasts between these two images have raised questions about China’s management of its inner diversity and triggered broader sociological interests. Moreover, the different ethnic statuses and attitudes towards the central authorities among the ethnic minorities have further clouded the understanding of relevant policies and political practices. Tibetans and Uyghurs, for example, are highlighted as facing institutional discrimination and repression, while the Zhuang, Muslim Hui, and Mongolians are seemingly cooperative with intimate connections to the Han majority as well as to the state.

My previous PhD program focused on Mongolian communities in China has discussed the relationship between the state-dominated construction of a universal civil identity and ethnic identities within local societies through ethnographic accounts. This proposed article as well as a few more in preparation will turn to the comparison of different ethnic minorities. I aim to unveil how ethnic minorities are represented, evaluated, and reproduced by the Chinese Communist Party, and why they are allocated political and emotional resources differently. Both a “civilizing program” and a “sanitizing program” will be introduced to point out how the Chinese authorities are making and remaking its citizenry.

CHEN, Anna Antong (University of Sydney)

*The trauma narrative in Wang Xiaobo’s fiction: irony, memory and identity*

Wang Xiaobo’s fiction has been extensively researched, and most of the research is concentrated on his narrative techniques, black humour, and craziness, with little attention given to his use of the trauma narrative. With focus on the trauma narrative in Wang Xiaobao’s fictional works, my thesis study offers a new perspective on the literary and aesthetic value of Wang’s works and his contributions to Chinese literature and culture. The central argument to be developed in my thesis is that Wang Xiaobo uses irony to alleviate the heavy sense of trauma narrative and presents trauma through memory as a way of expressing Chinese national identity during a rapidly changing era. This thesis has three core questions to address in developing its central argument: how is trauma narrated in his fiction? What is the relationship between irony, memory and identity within the trauma narrative? How does the trauma narrative affect his writing? The three questions will be addressed in detail in Chapters One, Two and Three, respectively. Chapter one unpacks the effects of trauma through an analysis of the narrative devices in Wang’s fiction. Chapter Two is devoted to an analysis of how the trauma narrative in his fiction resists the erosion of traumatic memories steps by step through irony. Chapter Three is concerned with the relationship between trauma and identity and the impact of trauma narrative on his fiction. This is a modern and contemporary Chinese literature research project that involves textual analysis, narrative analysis, stylistic analysis, thematic analysis, content analysis and comparative analysis. The data for analysis is the trauma narrative in Wang’s fiction. The theoretical framework for this study is built mainly on Michel Foucault’s theory of bio-politics in respect of the relationship between knowledge and power and how they can be used to control a subject.

CHEN, Eric Chia-Hwan (National Taipei University of Education)

*The Images of English-speaking Foreigners and the Taiwanese in the English Textbooks of Taiwan’s Elementary Schools*

This paper adopts the interdisciplinary approach of Imagology, a sub-discipline of comparative literature, to investigate the images of English-speaking foreigners and Taiwanese in the English textbooks of elementary schools in Taiwan. Since an image of the Other always mirrors an auto-image of the observer, a study of various images of English-speaking people in English textbooks will certainly reveal the genuine self-images of the Taiwanese. With a comprehensive and in-depth study of the images of English-speaking foreigners, the author argues most images of the objects in Taiwan’s elementary school English textbooks tend to be Utopian or neutral, while the Self-images of the subjects, namely the Taiwanese, tend to be sociological and less favourable. By genealogizing the images in question against the history of Taiwan, one may find editors of the textbooks in question are promoting a certain propaganda in which the English-speaking foreigners are given positive features and their cultures seem to be superior to those of the subjects.

CHEN, Hao (University of Glasgow)

*The Main Driving Forces of China’s Knowledge Economy Transition*

China, as a developing country, is undergoing a “great transformation” in economy. For the first decade of the 21st century, China was recognised as the largest world’s factory, which relies mainly on labour-intensive business and large-scale exports to sustain its economic growth. In recent years, some cities and regions in China have been relied heavily on innovation and knowledge-intensive industries to boost their economic growth. Although China’s effort to increase its innovative capacity has gradually been perceived, little is known about the factors and particular mechanisms that underpinned China’s knowledge economy transition. Thus, my research aims to uncover the factors and causal mechanisms underpinning China’s knowledge economy transition. Accordingly, my research adopts industrial path development approach to identify factors, and process tracing to make causal inference on this process. The empirical foundation of my research is the manual coding over 80 policy documents at the central and local level, and in-depth interviews with government officials, entrepreneurs and researchers in China. My preliminary findings demonstrate that local governments and innovators, which are guided by pragmatic industrial policies published by the central government, are key drivers of China’s knowledge economy transition. In this process, local governments promote industrial policy reforms and institutional changes to attract or cultivate high-tech enterprises, which in turn create innovative industries clusters and thus contribute to the knowledge economy transition. My research has potential to bring about theoretical contributions to the economic geography, and emprirical contributions to policymaking and economic development in the peripheral country and region by informing how China promotes innovation and economic reforms.

CHEN, Minjie (University of Nottinghan)

*Understanding disability in China through the life course: A case study of people with a visual impairment*

According to the Second National Sample Survey of Disabilities in China in 2006, there are 82.96 million people with disabilities across the country, accounting for 6.34% of the national population. However, although there is a large population of disabled people in China, their social, physical, and psychological needs are often ignored, and vocational stereotypes still exist for people with different types of disabilities. From education to work, people with visual impairments are strongly connected with and drawn into 'massage' as the most ‘suitable’ occupation. But we know very little about the ways in which their life courses, their trajectories and transitions, lead them there. The ‘life course’ is used to describe age-related and/or developmental life stages and the dynamic trajectories of a person's life (Elder, 1994). Taking people with visual impairments aged 18 to 40 years old with working experience in China as a case study, this paper explores their life course from their education-to-work transition and the factors affecting their transitions. By analysing 26 narratives of participants, it identifies typical and atypical pathways, pointing out the key factors that either keep the participants on an educational track that inevitably leads to massage, or that enable them to have more agency to make other decisions, or that even mean they are denied an education altogether. Finally, by comparing the similarity and differences across their life courses, it discusses all these factors and other interesting issues emerging from the participants’ narratives as we try to understand disabled people across their life course in China.

CHEN, Shan (Xihua University, China; currently visiting fellow University of Nottingham)

*How to best protect the vulnerable? A comparison of principles of Power of Attorney in China with those of England and Wales*

This paper offers a timely comparison of the legal protections for vulnerable adults in China and England and Wales, specifically guardianship in China and power of attorney (POA) in England and Wales. In England and Wales, the POA system (underpinned by the Mental Capacity Act of 2005) is the latest legal process and revision of adult guardianship designed to protect adults who lack or no longer have the capacity to organize or make decisions about their own financial or other matters. In China, there have been significant changes from the General Principles of Civil Law(1987) to the Civil Code (2020), however. This new law introduces a POA-like clause; namely, that a person having ‘full capacity for civil conduct’ could negotiate with his or her close relatives, or other eligible individuals or entities, about who will be the Donee, and a record of the decision is made in writing. These two acts (laws) provide a compelling basis for comparative research. Here I identify their differences and similarities based. I look at the qualifications of Donor and Donee, conditions for instrument taking effect, time of POA coming into force, rules of judging whether donor lacks mental capacity, the duties and rights of Donor and Donee, rules of invalidity and supervision. I conclude that each have their own advantages and disadvantages. Although some of the POA regime in England and Wales is innovative and effective, it does not necessarily guarantee success if adopted directly in China. Laws must reflect and influence society’s values and culture. Considering family structure, socio-cultural and psychological differences between Britain and China, my analysis recommends the establishment of a new framework through judicial interpretation on the basis of comparing and drawing on rules from England and Wales that are best suited to China. Given the increasingly aged nature of Chinese society, this research is very much needed to ensure that proper protections are in place going forward.

CHEN, Zishu (University of York)

*The redefined Yanggang (阳刚): female youth’s discourse (re)construction on Chinese masculinity*

The paper focuses on female fans’ discourse (re)construction on the concept Yang Gang and Chinese masculinity. Yang Gang (阳刚, also phrase as 阳刚之气, i.e. the temperament of Yang Gang, with an implication of macho, manly, and fortitude) has been recently constructed as a synonym, a representative word, a key principle of Chinese masculinity ideal by the authoritarian and mainstream discourse. The official advocate for the yanggang masculinity and critique of effeminate masculinity sparked an intense online discussion over the definition of yanggang and the conceptualisation of gender politics in Chinese perception. It also triggered some counter-discourses resisting authority’s endorsement and partiality for hegemonic masculinity. In addition to feminists, queers, and KOLs, there is one notable group – young female fans of popular subcultures who also actively participate in this resistant action. In my PhD project, I explore this group of people’s engagement with Chinese gender issues and feminism on social media, Weibo, in particular their discourse engagements in challenging the conventional and patriarchal gender norms and order obscured behind the Chinese language by wordplay. And in the paper, based on the “yanggang contention”, I will demonstrate and analyse how female fan informants utilise Chinese linguistic tricks, such as sarcasm, ironic metaphor and homophony, to redefine and even stigmatise the term yanggang, undermine the official discursive construction of hegemonic masculinity, and define a yin-yang mixed masculinity ideal of their own.

CHENG, Manxi (University of St Andrews)

*Transformation of Contemporary Chinese National Identity: The Constructed Self Based on Social Identity Theory*

This is an ongoing PhD project that aims to fathom the essential contemporary connotations of the Chinese national identity after President Xi Jinping came to power and to rationalise a framework adopted by Chinese authorities to cultivate the formation of a common identity.

This research is integrated with the Social Identity Theory (SIT), with three focuses on the self-other nexus as well as the pursuit of both distinctiveness and positiveness in defining identity. With a detailed review of Chinese historical and cultural heritages, this project then proposed a framework by integrating basic SIT assumptions into the Chinese context, which outlines the strategies that the authorities have adopted to forge the modern national identity.

To justify its practicability, the project uses four case studies on different social aspects to constitute the complete modern national identity, including political institutions, economy, domestic security, and culture. For case studies, the researcher will conduct discourse analysis from original interviews with ordinary Chinese people, official records and online discussions. All case studies were chosen from incidents in the last decade, which have generated widespread social discussion and then been contained into the official discourse in identity building.

This research argues that the current Chinese national identity is a mixture of the reflection of selected historical resources and continuous social comparisons with the West, both of which are constructed by the Communist party’s instrumental design. Meanwhile, this research also tries to contribute to the prevalent discussion about the growing aggressive China on the regional and international stage.

CHI, Yvonne (University of St Andrews)

*Religions and identities in conflict talk- Taiwanese spouses’ cross-cultural marriage*

This paper investigates how Taiwanese-foreign spouses with different religions and cultural backgrounds construct their identities through their conversations from a socio-cultural perspective. It is based on the interviews, observations, and naturally- occurring conversations between three couples. The participants consist of Taiwanese nationals, and their foreign partners (Japanese, Italian, and Pakistani) living in Taiwan. Conflict talks have been widely discussed in numerous diverse fields, as for example in politics, sociology, anthropology, communication studies, psychology and linguistics and the concept of conflict is generally viewed negatively (Leung 2001). In order to understand such talk in interaction, the study takes an interactional sociolinguistic approach to analyse how their discourse identities are performed. The study attempts to provide a better understanding of cross-cultural couples’ interaction in religion and identity contexts through a microanalysis of the sequential turns. The analysis demonstrates how the three Taiwanese-foreign couples use different discourse strategies to negotiate and share their different attitudes, preferences, cultural values and identities during conversations.

CHIN, Sei Jeong (Ewha Womans University)

*The Nationalist Government and the Making of Invisible Media Censorship Regime in Postwar Shanghai (1945-1949)*

This paper explores how the Nationalist government established a new media censorship regime in postwar China and analyzes the reasons behind the inefficacy of this new informal media censorship regime. After the Japanese surrender in August 1945, the Nationalist government took over and exerted direct control over the major Shanghai newspapers, which were previously controlled by the Japanese and their collaborators under the Japanese occupation during the war. Facing public criticism and international pressure, however, the Nationalist government, which relied heavily on the formal media censorship during the wartime, abolished the formal media censorship system in March 1946. To adapt to the new postwar political environment, the Nationalist government established a new informal media censorship regime, which was internal and invisible, by establishing a consultative organization consisting of media and government/party personnel in the state-dominated media structure. Ironically, despite unprecedented direct control over the Shanghai newspapers, the postwar informal media censorship regime was highly ineffective in marginalizing and delegitimizing dissenting voices. Due to its inefficiency, the Nationalist government resorted to closing down and outright suppression of dissenting newspapers such as Wenhuibao and others. With visible conflicts and confrontation between the state and the Shanghai newspapers, the postwar media censorship regime gradually lost its legitimacy. I argue that the informal media censorship regime in postwar Shanghai was ineffective due to its failure to draw out voluntary cooperation and the Nationalist government’s resort to visible outright suppression of dissenting voices.

CZELLÉR, Mark (University of London)

*Filial Affection as Political Failing: The Children of Rural Class Enemies under the Maoist Emotional Regime*

Scholars have shown that the Chinese Communist Party under Mao was highly attuned to the role of emotions in human thought and action, and developed sophisticated techniques to channel them towards its political aims. How did people experience the system of normative emotions that developed from these political projects, or what, following William Reddy, we might call the Maoist ‘emotional regime’? This paper addresses this question from the perspective of one particular group, those whose families were classified as ‘landlords’ or ‘rich peasants.’ It shows that those from such backgrounds were expected to renounce any filial emotion and to develop hostility towards their parents. This expectation emerged during land reform (1946-52), was systematically reinforced during the Socialist Education Movement (1963-66), and put those who were subject to it in a situation of acute emotional conflict. The paper goes on to explore the difficulties faced, first, by those who tried to meet official expectations, and second, those who rejected the Party and sided with their families, concluding that for the majority, the emotional conflict could be temporarily avoided but could not be resolved. Finally, the paper argues that the larger-scale assault on the parent-child bond that took place during Cultural Revolution (1966-76), widely denounced in post-Mao discourse, is best understood not simply as an extreme manifestation of the Party’s anti-traditionalism, but as the broadening of practices that had developed primarily in connection with rural class enemies.

D’AQUILA, Giulia (King’s College London)

*Comparing utopias: registering shifts in the cinematic representations of Chinese power in the international arena through a narrative analysis of three ‘new main melody’ films*

With a large institutional restructuring plan in 2018, the production of films in the People’s Republic of China was put under the jurisdiction of the Publicity Department, operating under the supervision of the Propaganda and Ideational Work Central Leading Small Group. This process has put film, which has historically been used as a political instrument by the Chinese government, under an even tighter ideological control. A result of this restructuring has been the emergence of ‘new main melody’ films, economically successful and politically orthodox film productions which typically obtain strong box office success in China and very low reception in Europe or North America, where they are mostly distributed with the aim of targeting Chinese audiences overseas.

Despite the clear ideological messages conveyed by films belonging to this genre, however, a close inspection of the narratives of different films reveals discrepancies and differences in the projection of China’s role in the international arena. These differences, collaterally, betray the existence of competing visions of China as a global power. Through a narrative analysis of *The Wandering Earth II*, *Sniper* and *The Battle at Lake Changjin*, this paper unveils the international narratives conveyed in each film respectively and highlights parallel and competing representations of the role of China as a leading power in the international arena.

DONG, Yongqiang (Xidian University, China)

*A new historical proof of the Relationship between the Tang and the Champa in the early Zhenguan Period: Centered on the Epitaph of Yuan Gui*

The relationship between the Tang Empire and the Champa (林邑) was close. Records of envoys from the Champa to pay tribute to the Tang Dynasty cloud be found in historical books, but there was no case of envoys from The Tang Dynasty to the Champa. The newly published Epitaph of Yuan Gui shows that, in the third year(629 AD) of the reign of Emperor Zhenguan (貞觀), He was sent by Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty (唐太宗) to the Champa as a deputy envoy, with the purpose of entitling Fan Touli (范頭黎), the new king of the Champa. Yuan Gui died in Bi Jing (比景) on the diplomatic mission. Fan Touli’s image and clothing information should be brought back Chang’an(長安) by Yuan Gui’s mission, which became the main basis for carving Fan Touli’s stone statue among the fourteen chiefs in Zhao Ling (昭陵). The record of Yuan Gui’s mission to the Champa in his epitaph has no parallels in other existing historical data, and witnesses an important event in the history of the Tang Empire's foreign relations.

DUCKETT, Jane (University of Glasgow)

*Social policy under Xi Jinping: towards universal provision and common prosperity?*

The Hu Jintao administration (2002–2012) confounded predictions of political scientists and China experts alike by extending social security entitlements such as income support, pensions, and health insurance, to rural dwellers and urban residents without work. But it only modestly funded these new entitlements for the less well-off, and so failed to reduce inequalities. Indeed, the policies were regressive overall. Yet, in establishing wide participation, social policies in this decade potentially laid the foundations for universal provision. The question then is what has happened since. Despite much scholarly and media attention to Xi’s ‘common prosperity’ (*gongtong fuyu*) agenda, there has yet to be a comprehensive assessment of the social policies in his first decade in power. Has Xi Jinping, with his focus on eliminating poverty and rhetoric on common prosperity built on Hu period foundations to deepen provisions for those on lower incomes and move toward universal provision? This paper uses a combination of documentary research and data on public spending to set out and evaluate key social policies adopted in Xi’s first decade. It concludes on what they tell us about Xi’s commitment to reducing inequality and achieving ‘common prosperity’, his ability to tackle vested interests in the current distribution of public goods, and ultimately the extent and limits of his power.

FAN, Yibo (Swansea university)

*Sexual abuse against boys in China: A life course perspective exploring how do social, cultural and policy matters influence survivors’ coping strategies following sexual abuse*

This presentation will focus on the risk factors for child sexual abuse among male survivors in my PhD study, as well as their decisions regarding disclosure, including barriers to disclosure, and the consequences following disclosure. The number of male survivors of CSA is likely underestimated due to the relatively low rate of disclosure among this population (Hébert et al. 2009; Ungar et al. 2009b). It is therefore crucial to listen to the voices of these male survivors to provide effective interventions. Data for this study consist of 27 one-on-one semi-structured interviews with adult males in China who experienced sexual victimisation in childhood. Interviews were conducted between 2020 and 2021 via phone calls or video chat applications (WeChat) and lasted an average of 100 minutes each. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using language-based thematic analysis on NVivo (Sandelowski and Barroso 2006). Results show that offenders with different socio-demographic characteristics (young perpetrators, male authority figures, and female perpetrators) influenced the survivors' decisions on disclosure. In fact, some barriers to disclosure were found in all three groups of survivors, such as a sense of shame, lack of knowledge about sex and body (did not understand they had been abused), and distrust of others (had no one to tell). However, each group had their "unique barriers". For example, some survivors who had been sexually abused by young perpetrators indicated that they experienced sexual pleasure during the abuse or fell in love with the perpetrator; this led them to feel responsible for the abuse, making them reluctant to disclose their experiences. Regarding female-perpetrated survivors, some indicated that, under China's law, a female could not be punished as a sexual offender; therefore, disclosure seemed meaningless. Survivors who had been sexually abused by male authority figures indicated that they experienced pressure from the perpetrators or the institutions supporting them. To more fully understand CSA in China and its impact, and to contribute to prevention and safeguarding efforts, it is crucial to pay further attention to the barriers of disclosure within the Chinese socio-cultural context, particularly the influence of cultural and policy factors.

FANG, Wenxin (University of Hong Kong)

*The Consistency of Meaning: Dilemmas and Solutions of Recomposing Ritual Music in the Han Dynasty*

The debate on whether sacrifice rituals should use ancient music inherited from previous dynasties or new songs created by the present emperor appears several times in texts from the Warring States to the Han dynasty. This study begins with tracking the event of reconstructing rites and music lead by Sun Shutong孫叔通 and interpretations on the nature of music from Ji An 汲黯 and Dong Zhongshu董仲舒, and explores the reasons why ritual music contributed to meaning-making, arguing that it was based on early Chinese folk beliefs about sound, and that intellectuals theorized and systematized the function of music in connecting humans and the universe, providing the official rituals with explanation of fulfilling the mandate of heaven or expressing the will of heaven. By analyzing historical sources and sorting out the transmission and evolution of ritual music and dance in the suburban and ancestral sacrifice rituals in the Han dynasty, this study finds that new songs such as the *Lingxing*（靈星, Spiritual Stars) and the *Jiaosi ge* (郊祀歌，Songs for Suburban Sacrifices) were composed in early Han period. The renaming and modification of the *Shao*(韶) and the *Wu*(武) also breaks the dichotomy between succession and creation. The ancient music tradition claimed by Ji An signifies a conceptual inheritance of virtues, while the new songs represent discontinuity on the back of innovation.

FENG, Yuda (King’s College London)

*Money on and off the Screen: Subjectivity and Spectatorship under the Influence of Consumerism in People’s Republic of China after 2008*

As movies have become an integral part of the thriving consumerism in PRC, it is not surprising that films depicting experiences of consumerism also become successful in film market recently. This paper examines the experiences of money in contemporary Chinese commercial films through a case study of *Lost in Thailand* (*Taijiong*, Xu Zhen, 2012) and *Hello Mr. Billionaire* (*Xihongshi Shoufu*, Yan Fei and Peng Da Mo, 2018), and focuses on the correlation between subjectivity depicted in films and the spectator subjectivity under the influence of consumerism.

I identify two noticeable trends after 2008. First, most movie theaters are now located in shopping malls, and the proportion of theatres in smaller cities and towns is increasing (Zhang 2020; Ho and Chung 2016). Second, since 2011, big-budget period martial arts films have faced failures, while comedies featuring wealth gap and heavy money-spending scenarios set in the present day have gained popularity in the market (Zhang 2020).

This study explores how the textual pattern of films changes in accordance with changes in spectatorship. Commercial movies require big budgets to attract consumers so that the audience can see “money” on screen. However, while the old martial arts spectacular fails, we observe the market success of explicit portrayal of money-spending, such as tourism in *Lost*, and mountainous piles of cash themselves in *Billionaire.* This paper argues that the new shopping mall and blockbuster configuration implies a new cultural logic, which shapes subjectivities on and off the screen through new experiences of money.

FORSTER, Elisabeth (University of Southampton)

*A just war versus a dignified peace: discourses about war and peace in the negotiations between CCP and GMD in early 1949*

By the end of 1948, the CCP had almost won the civil war and the GMD therefore sued for peace. Under the circumstances, the CCP had little motivation to enter a compromise peace with the GMD. Simultaneously, however, it had depicted itself as peaceful ever since advocating the Second United Front in the mid-1930s.

To prevent the peace while maintaining its image of peacefulness, I argue, the CCP deployed just war theory. Just war theory is the idea that there are just wars (e.g. self-defence), which are legitimate and in the serviced of for peace, and unjust wars (e.g. aggression), which are illegitimate. Just war theory is inscribed into current international law and was adopted by China after the First World War.

During the peace negotiations of early 1949, the GMD and the CCP used different frameworks of war and peace to narrate the civil war. The GMD claimed that it was a family squabble that should be resolved through a dignified peace short of surrender. The CCP declared its side of the civil war to be a just war and that the GMD leadership, who were the unjust side of the war, needed to be tried as “war criminals”, which was a feature of the global practice of just war theory at the time. As the GMD had to reject these conditions, the CCP was able to fight the war to victory, without harming the logic through which it was arguing that it was peaceful.

FOX, Lucy (The University of Nottingham)

*“At least, for a little bit of the department, they still need me”: Women’s experiences and feelings of belonging in Chinese STEM academia*

Although increasing numbers of Chinese women are now pursuing degrees in STEM subjects, they continue to be significantly underrepresented in STEM academic careers. Scholars have so far attributed this to Chinese women having lower ‘achievement motivation’ in STEM than men, due to the internalisation of gendered career expectations and less self-confidence in mathematics. However, the experiences of women who do choose to work in STEM academia in China, and the effects of these experiences on their feelings of belonging in STEM, have yet to be explored.

This paper therefore presents the China-specific findings of a larger comparative project that explores the experiences of women working in STEM academia in China and the UK. Based on semi-structured interviews with 13 female STEM academics in China, it finds that STEM academia is an especially demanding career, with high output requirements. Interviewees therefore see the gender gap as the ‘natural’ result of women’s physical weakness and additional domestic responsibilities, which prevent them from meeting the same demanding standards as unburdened male colleagues. However, providing that female academics’ work contributes to the department, they consider themselves equally respected members of the STEM community. This is in stark contrast to UK-based interviewees, who consider themselves just as capable as their male counterparts but feel less accepted in STEM subjects. Drawing on social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 2004), the paper then argues that this is due to differences in conceptualisations of STEM, and of ‘belonging’ itself, in the two contexts.

FUSINI, Letizia (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London)

*Tragedy, modernity and beiju in 1920s Chinese intellectual discourse and dramaturgy*

The concepts of tragedy and the tragic entered China's intellectual arena at the turn of the 20th century within the context of the New Culture and the May Fourth Movements and as a result of a systematic study of Western literature and critical theory. Tragedy thus captured the imagination of several Chinese intellectuals and playwrights who, from the 1920s onwards, attempted to create their own tragic works (*beiju*) with a view of forging a *modern* Chinese tragic spirit.

But what are the characteristics of this ‘tragic’ spirit, and how does it compare to ‘Western’ ideas of tragedy? Moreover, does it add something new to the ongoing debates on the relationship between tragedy and modernity? The Chinese intellectuals’ early conceptualisation(s) of this genre in terms of content, structure and social function will be appraised as part of a comprehensive, transnational discourse that seeks to incorporate *beiju* within the broader realm of tragic theory. Particularly, by scrutinising the links between *beiju* and Aristotelian tragedy, it will be argued that the idea of *beiju* may be said to reconcile the two apparently antagonistic categories of tragedy and modernity in a way that prefigures Brecht’s epic theatre. Additionally, through an analysis of the tragic conflict underlying three tragic texts written in the 1920s by three different Chinese playwrights (Tian Han, Ouyang Yuqian and Bai Wei), it will be shown that the spirit of *beiju* consists in actively opposing evil and adversity through acts of heroic resistance that wipe out the protagonist’s initial grief, thus providing the audience with valuable models to learn from.

GATHERER, William (The University of Queensland)

*Anxiety in the anthropocene: Post-postmodernism and eco-consciousness within the contemporary novels of Ma Yuan (马原)*

Ma Yuan is widely considered to be one of the key authors of the Chinese Avant-Garde Movement of the 1980s and is often accredited as being one of China’s first identifiable authors of ‘metafiction’ and as such played a crucial role within the adoption of Postmodern aesthetics and narrative devices within a Chinese context. Whilst critical approaches to the Avant-Garde movement were informed by theoretical approaches to postmodernism, the author’s recently published works, starting from 2012 after the author had ceased writing fiction for over 20 years, are now operating within an entirely different ‘post-postmodern’ context which requires a new interpretive framework. Within this paper I will specifically address the Post-postmodern dynamics within the author’s recent works of fiction ranging from the highly metafictional works *Monsters and Demons* (牛鬼蛇神) and *Guniangzhai* (姑娘寨), to recent ‘realist’ novels such as *The Huang Tang Family* (黄堂一家) and *Entanglement* (纠缠), all of which feature a distinct form of eco-consciousness and a critique of the philosophical underpinnings of contemporary Chinese society not only in relation to the teleological master narrative of unrestrained economic development, but also the increasing marginalisation of pre-modern spiritual beliefs and cultural practices within China’s non-Han ethnic minorities. As such Ma Yuan’s contemporary works offer key insights into the dynamics of the Chinese Post-postmodern condition and furthermore the philosophical positioning of climate change and environmental degradation in relation to late-stage capitalism within a Chinese context.

GAO, Shiyu (The University of Edinburgh)

*Surveillance Bodies in Contemporary Chinese Expanded Media Art*

With the advancement of digital technologies, there are increasing concerns about the constant threat of surveillance, espionage, and censorship surrounding every aspect of daily life in the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Due to the impacts of COVID-19 when physical contact is restrained, daily life’s dramatic dependence on technology and applications initially used to control the coronavirus spread have generated new surveillance methods and control mechanisms. The paper focuses on body representation with innovative media to reflect the PRC’s expanding surveillance produced by ordinary people’s everyday online activities even though that is already being carried out by the government and giant tech corporations like Tencent and Alibaba, which embodies David Lyon’s concept of ‘surveillance culture’. The paper provides a close critical analysis of multimedia artworks, especially Cao Fei’s *i, mirror* (2007), Yang Zhenzhong’s *Fence* (2017), and Zhang Peili’s *A Live Stream That May Last for Years* (2021-) to show the different artistic strategies to challenge the expanding monitoring in the new age of ‘digital China’. The paper argues how the representation of the body, as both the object and the subject of the subtler surveillance collectively undertaken by the PRC’s authorities and civilians in their everyday lives, leads contemporary artists to explore the potential for new subjectivities beyond reality in the virtual space. I complicate Jacques Rancière’s concept of the ‘passive spectator’ and rethink the interrelated roles of artists and audiences to question the legitimacy of digital surveillance expanded into the everyday domain.

GARCÍA, Leticia del Toro (Independent Researcher)

*打工妹dagongmei: an approach to feminine migration in contemporary China through literature*

The development of industrialization in China during the eighties carried thousands of people to abandon rural areas in search of a better life. They constituted a mass of unspecialized working forces that occupied the lowest levels in the emerging factories and mass production channels.

The purpose of my presentation is to show how these women subsist and express themselves through literature. They have constituted a group of their own known as 打工妹 *dagongmei* that express themselves through literature, both novels, and poetry. Paradoxically, women authors also constitute a minority when compared to the number of male authors who also portrait their experiences through this medium.

My presentation will be centered on 打工妹 *dagongmei* and the manner they use poetry to express themselves, to achieve a voice that society has silenced.

With my analysis, I want to provide how literature, without losing its artistic essence, becomes an excellent medium to give voice to social collectives that are stigmatized and still suffer because of their genre. With their writings, these women awake social consciousness on the tough conditions many human beings have lived and still do in the most industrialized areas of the world, as is the case of China. As a consequence of this circumstance, getting to know their works is a good way of making their voices be heard.

GE, Xiao (University of York)

*Can we talk about anger? Postpartum women’s subjective emotional experience in commercial zuo yue zi practice*

*Zuo yue zi* (‘sitting-the-month’) is a postpartum confinement that is believed to be beneficial for *women*’s recovery after childbirth. Rationalised by the medicalisation of ‘female biology’, this practice - claiming ‘female sex’ is ‘weak’ due to its ‘natural’ reproductive function - is couched within a hetero-patriarchal context. Now with an emerging postpartum care-providing industry, middle-class women are offered consumerist options to purchase various ‘sitting-the-month’ packages from the market. In this paper, I will examine how my *postpartum women* participants, informed by the oppressive and controlling discourses around motherhood and womanhood, understand their embodied self during their postpartum period. I observe there are contradictory and competing discourses from the market (i.e. celebrating women’s individual empowerment manifested in consumptions) and the socio-political agenda (i.e. coercing women into subservience to a paternal patriarchal state) that are internalised by postpartum women at times, which makes them torn and burned-out. By talking about these women’s emotions such as fear, guilt, loneliness, and anger during their commercial *yue zi* (‘the month’) practice, I hope to bring insights into discussing what supports on reproductive health and childcare are adequate and effective to address birthing people’s vulnerability while acknowledging and fostering their autonomy.

GIUFFRÈ, Salvatore (Independent Researcher)

*Symbolism and Decadence in the Modernist Poetry of Wang Duqing*

This paper explores Western, especially French, influences in the obscure poetry of Wang Duqing, young poet of China’s Republican Era. The innovation of Wang Duqing’s poetry lies in his awareness of modernity during a period when young intellectuals studied abroad and had the opportunity to gain first-hand experience with those new cultures that eventually shaped modern Chinese literature. Although his fame is not so widely spread, the poetry of Wang Duqing can be considered as another successful example of how young poets of the Republican Era integrated models from the West into their writings forming a modern and national literature for the people. French symbolists became for Wang Duqing a source of maximum inspiration. The Chinese intellectual attempts to alter the figure of the poet bestowing on him a social mandate. His writings transcend Chinese linguistic rules and renew the poetic form as a fluid and communicative means of expression. The dominant themes are sorrow, loneliness, nostalgia and isolation represented by gloomy and melancholic images: rain and mist, dusk, memories, dreams, ruined cities, broken hearts, etc. The details of urban life thus become the new protagonists of the new literature and even the most traditional themes are used in rather unconventional ways. Wang Duqing poetically depicts a world where memory serves as both the medium and the content of his own creation. This world, filled with blurred or distant images both in space and in time, exacerbate the *ennui* of the poetic subject and become lyrical material for fine examples of Modernist writings in Chinese literature of the Republican Era.

Goh, Wei Hao (King’s College London)

*Nothing Is Real: The Post-human in Gigant DOKU: LuYang the Destroyer (2021)*

*Gigant DOKU: LuYang the Destroyer* (2021) — named after the artist’s digital avatar DOKU — is a performance work by Chinese artist 陆扬 LuYang (b. 1984) which features a gigantic version of DOKU shooting lasers out of their eyes to destroy the city they are dancing on. The digital avatar was created using the artist’s face while their movement patterns are performed by a dancer and then recorded using motion capture technology and projected onto the work in real-time. Through an analysis of this work, I look at how LuYang and DOKU subvert the different humanist systems that seek to control them — namely, gender binaries and the idea of a digital/‘real’ world divide — by creating a fragmented body that is capable of being endlessly destroyed and ‘reincarnated’ into different post-human bodies — recalling Buddhist traditions which the artist is inspired by. This subversion is achieved through the creation of different unique versions of DOKU through the utilisation of different digital technologies, such as motion-capture technology and virtual reality, and performance tactics that ensure each performance of the work is unique. More importantly, the ability to create endless versions of DOKU challenges the process of signification itself as it suggests that the body is merely representational, made up of endless signs that are not inherently meaningful. I conclude, however, by discussing how and why this post-human body still possesses many humanist characteristics as it is still premised on the creation of ‘coherent’ bodies that can be understood by audiences as subversive. This is ultimately achieved through the use of symbols coded with humanist language such as religious and pop-culture iconography.

GUO, Kaidong (University College London)

*Living Under the Same Roof: Interdependent Relations between Liushou Children and Their Grandparents*

The unprecedented scale of internal migration in China has resulted in more than 61 million children, commonly known as ‘liushou children’ in the public media, facing prolonged family separation from their migrant parents. Mainstream studies have widely implied that liushou members are a family burden. Apart from passively affording the negative impacts of migration, they are invisible and often simply waiting for the return of migrants. Besides, although grandparents perform a significant role in caregiving, influenced by a migrant-centered research paradigm, the binary relationship between migrant parents and liushou children remains at the heart of discussions on family life in this field. As a result, in mainstream research on liushou families, the grandparent-grandchildren relation is often invisible. This has meant that their daily family lives and inter-generational relationships between liushou children and their grandparents remain surprisingly under-researched. By drawing on eight months of ethnographic research in Sichuan, China, this study provides a more textured lens on liushou children and their grandparents’ daily lives in the face of long-term family separation. Compared to treating liushou children as passive recipients or burdens for their grandparents, this study uses interdependent relations to describe the relationship between these grandparents and children. In particular, apart from being cared for, children also play the roles of life assistant and digital assistant for their grandparents. By providing liushou members’ perspective, this study contributes to the understanding of family dynamics in the context of internal migration in China.

GUO, Li (King’s College London)

*Environmental Advocacy and Knowledge Fight in Authoritarian Policy Making: Cases of Biodiversity Governance and Biosafety Regulations in China*

In past decades, China’s biodiversity governance has gone through major transformations. China has made many decisions in scientifically complex and uncertain issue areas in which policy ideas compete on scientific grounds. Why do some environmental policy ideas prevail while others fail in authoritarian regimes? The existing literature on authoritarian environmental policy making focuses on policy entrepreneurs and issue framing in civil society contestation and ignores the role of knowledge production and mobilization in the process. My research investigates the dynamics at the interface of the state, the pubic, and science in key issue areas of CBD, i.e., national parks and protected area reforms, biosafety regulations, and access to and benefit sharing of genetic resources in China. Drawing on about 200 interviews conducted during 2015-2021, I argue that political saliency and the advocacy of knowledge-based actors are key to the success of environmental ideas. My research sheds lights on the major development in China’s biodiversity governance, identifies previously obscure dynamics and political actors in environmental policy making and civil society development, and breaks new ground in examining the science-politics interface in authoritarian regimes.

HAN, Yunzi (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London)

*The Exemplary Mother and the Politics of Sacrifice: A Comparative Analysis of The May Lady (1998, dir. Rakhshan Banietemad) and Fengshui (2012, dir. Wang Jing)*

Centring on women’s agency in the politics of sacrifice and single motherhood represented in contemporary Chinese and Iranian cinemas, this paper questions liberal feminist thinking’s application in non-Western, Asian contexts. Innovatively bridging together two fundamentally different cultures – Islam and Confucianism, this paper proposes seeing Asia as sites of knowledge production rather than mere case studies in feminist discourses. Moving beyond evaluating women’s agency in the pervasive binary of resistance and subordination, this study draws attention to the workings of power in what Homi Bhabha calls “in-between-ness”, or in the interstices of overlapping structures/ concepts/ standards of patriarchy, womanhood, motherhood, masculinity, stigma, exemplar in Chinese and Iranian contexts. Drawing upon Saba Mahmood’s modalities of agency and Andrea O’Reilly’s empowered mothering, this paper digs into the empowerment process of the two single mothers Baoli and Forough by focusing on their practice of sacrifice in *Fengshui* and *The May Lady.* By examining their relationships with their sons, this paper investigates into the workings of power in the dynamics between women’s agency and crisis of masculinity, suggests that manipulation can be a form of agency for women; thus, unfolds that the rules of patriarchy, while restrictive of women, can also give them power.

HAO, Chuanjin (University of Nottingham)

*The tiao-kuai Relationship of China’s Provincial Public Health Emergency System*

In early 2020, the Chinese government responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in Wuhan by taking drastic measures to lock down the entire city of 11 million inhabitants. Three years later, in early December 2022, the Chinese government decided to liberalise its zero-COVID policy. These three years of COVID-19 policy development involved multiple levels and departments of governmental organisations. The horizontal and vertical relationships between these various levels and types of department form what has been described as a complex *tiao-kuai* 条块 system (tiao means departments with similar functions that extend from the central government to the basic level governments, while *kuai* refers to local governments at all levels, including provinces, municipal counties/districts, and townships/sub-districts). My research examines the manifestation and evolution of the *tiao-kuai* structure in China's health emergency system during this time through a particular provincial-level nexus. Through a systematic analysis of policy documents as well as follow-up interviews, I explain the relationships between the various elements of the *tiao-kuai* structure using, in part, Pierson's three dynamics framework: reservation of specific powers to constituent units explore the limits of *tiao to kuai*; interest expression to different tiers illustrates the feedback of *kuai to tiao*; and the extent of commitment to fiscal equalisation is used to explain the extent to which the dual management of *tiao and kuai* is compromised. However, while Pierson's three dynamics framework helps to explain the coupling and fragmentation of the *tiao-kuai* structure, it cannot explain the politicisation of administrative operations, which, my analysis reveals, ultimately highlights the non-institutional factors *behind* the *tiao-kuai* structure (such as the personal and arbitrary power of leaders and *guanxi*). Understanding this structure and its drivers can help China better respond to potential health emergencies in the future. It can also be used to understand how the Chinese government responds to other events and developments involving multiple layers and units of policy responsibility.

HAO, Patrick (Pak Hei) (University of Oxford)

*A “sinner for a thousand years”? The personal agency of Chris Patten and late colonial political reform in Hong Kong, 1989-94*

This paper is adapted from a chapter of my ongoing PhD project, an exploration of why British colonial policy towards Hong Kong dramatically shifted from an approach of gradual democratisation and cooperation with China to rapid democratisation and confrontation with China during the period from 1989-94. My project seeks to create a substantive explanatory framework for why this extraordinary policy shift occurred, which ultimately resulted in a process of rapid democratisation during the 1990s. This democratising process gave rise to two conflicting forces: an incipient tradition of popular political participation in Hong Kong, and Chinese determination to prevent further democratisation. The tension between the two exploded in the 2010s with monumental consequences.

While several explanations have been put forth by existing literature for why this policy shift occurred, none of these explanations or any combination thereof have hitherto been tested against relevant sources declassified by the [UK] National Archives in June 2020. Through extensively utilising highly pertinent FCO (Foreign & Commonwealth Office), CAB (Cabinet Office), and PREM (Prime Minister’s Office) documents, cross-referenced against Oral History interviews with key policymakers such as Chris Patten (Governor of Hong Kong, 1992-97), this paper empirically evaluates the argument that this dramatic policy shift can be explained to a significant degree by Patten’s personal agency as a radical democratiser. It shows and ultimately concludes that while Patten was undeniably a major policymaking actor who held considerable influence over the specific nature of the reforms implemented, the archival record demonstrates that the existing scholarly portrayal of Patten as a radical initiator of democratic reforms is highly flawed and oversimplistic.

HOMPOT, Sebestyén (University of Vienna)

*Globalizing the Wenming (Civilization) Discourse: The Global Civilization Initiative (2023) and New Trends in the CCP’s Quest for Discourse Power Outside the PRC*

In mainland Chinese domestic political discourses, *wenming* 文明 (civilization/civility) has long served as a framework for the official communication of state-engineered visions of modernization and progress. A recent development is the apparent interest of the CCP leadership in globalizing the *wenming* discourse in its quest for discourse power beyond China’s borders. This has been especially highlighted by Xi Jinping’s recent announcement of the Global Civilization Initiative (*quanqiu wenming changyi* 全球文明倡议) in March 2023. The proposed paper is based on the quantitative and qualitative discourse analysis of recent political, media, and academic discussions of the *wenming* topic in a globalized context.

I argue that the CCP leadership’s principal motivation for globalizing *wenming* is to create an international anti-hegemonic discourse, largely targeting the perceived hegemony and intrusiveness of Western cultural values and political institutions. The discursive tools for this include the construction of essentialized “civilizational spheres” as units of analysis, the mythicized narrativization of supposedly peaceful and “win-win” traditions of interaction between China and other “civilizations”, and contrasting these with historical Western colonialism and the perceived hegemonic attitudes of the U.S. leadership today. I argue that the reception of the global *wenming* discourse outside of China will therefore largely be determined by foreign actors’ attitudes towards the anti-hegemony discourse. The paper also includes insights from Hungary (the author’s native country), thereby emphasizing the importance of case studies for understanding the implications of the CCP’s newly emerging strategy for obtaining discourse power abroad.

HOTUNG, Sean (University of Exeter)

*Is Hong Kong’s New Security Law Constitutional?*

On 30th June, 2020, the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress passed ‘The Law of the People’s Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security on the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region’ (“NSL”). The NSL was passed in response to the mass protests of March 2019 that had arisen in opposition to the planned Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019 that would allow Hong Kong (“HK”) the surrender ‘of a person’ to the PRC. HK’s One Country-Two Systems rests upon the twin pillars of the Rule of Law (“RoL”) and capitalism that is protected by the language of the Basic Law. The NSL was first put into ‘action’ in the case of Tong Ying-kit. The NSL was then put beyond constitutional challenge by the highest judges in a case against media mogul Jimmy Lai.

This paper makes two arguments. First, HK’s highest court failed to act to protect the RoL and that the NSL, at this time, is subject to constitutional challenge. Second, the PRC has the legal means to place the NSL beyond constitutional challenge in conjunction with infusing ‘socialist characteristics’ into HK’s capitalism and RoL that would promote the objectives of the Basic Law. To conclude, this work contributes to the ongoing analysis of a socialist system’s ascendency over HK’s common law system and the Basic Law. The empirical materials used are HK’s Ordinances, cases-laws, respective Constitutions and laws of the PRC and HK, in conjunction with government reports and existing academic literature.

HUA, Jingbo (The University of Edinburgh)

*NGOs and Local Governance: A Case Study of China’s Rural Education*

NGOs play a crucial role in development has been widely acknowledged in recent decades, especially in Western democracies. In weak or non-democratic states, NGOs face uncertainties and challenges due to limited political space as NGOs’ mission of advocacy is restricted. However, NGO’s operational role, such as providing public services to communities, is often undervalued. This research focuses on grassroots NGOs in rural education in China and investigates their role in local governance and their interactions with local governments. Two research questions are proposed: 1) What is the nature of NGO-government relationships in rural education development? 2) How do NGOs and local governments collaborate on policymaking and service delivery? Using a mixed survey and interview method, data will be collected from over 800 rural education-related NGOs in China. The survey will explore the factors that shape NGO-government relationships and performance from a quantitative perspective, and the follow-up interviews will examine the effectiveness of the current cooperative mechanisms with empirical evidence. This study aims to contribute to the limited research on NGOs in non-Western democratic states and grassroots NGOs in local governance. It also explores the usage of quantitative methods in studying NGOs in China, as most relevant data are either deficient or not available to the public. Moreover, it provides implications for improving state-NGO relationships and releasing the potential of NGOs under weak democracies or authoritarian regimes.

HUANG-KOKINA, Alexandra (The University of Edinburgh)

*Intermedial Musical Poetries: Voice Translation and the Transmission of Affect in Feng Zhi’s Sonnets*

Feng Zhi’s extolled Fourteen-Line Collection (Shisihang ji, or《十四行集》) is the Modernist epitome of poetic experimentation during the Republic of China. As a fervent translator of German literature, Feng enacts myriad strategies of voice translation in his poetic language beyond the semantic level. This paper explores the ways in which the twenty-seven poems in Shisihang ji, as the first collection of sonnets written in Chinese, are characterised by an intermedial translation style that spans across lexical variations, geo-cultural contexts, and artistic mediums. Prime examples include Feng’s transcription of guwen’s (古文) classical idioms into vernacular baihuawen (白話文); his adaptation of exalted European aesthetics by Goethe, van Gogh, and Rainer Maria Rilke into quotidian motifs within Chinese rural modernity; and the remediation of ancient song lyrics and Peking opera stylistics into motion images and sounds. Notably, in the creative process of intermedial translation, Feng’s reliance on extra-linguistic attributes leads to the transmission of affect in an inter-semiotic way, which reinterprets the verbal signs of emotions and desire by means of non-verbal, and primarily musical, signification. For example, the second sonnet thematises the lifecycle of moulting cicadas as tied with the separable entities of musical form and content, which exceeds the derivative representation of worldly matters via linguistic grammar. Likewise, the first six sonnets share an analogous sentiment in transcending the common trepidation of death through natural and cosmic phenomenology, which finds its foremost expression in music that at once invokes ephemeral sensations and immortal paradigms. I argue that music, via its explicit and implicit manifestations, formulates Feng’s idiosyncratic take on emotive experiences preceding Mao’s China, immersed in the reveries of proto-Modernist literary freedom. It can be added that Feng’s sonnets, once translated into English, evokes further musical dimensions that complement the emotional prosodies within this collection.

HUANG, Fei (University of Westminster)

*Constructing stay-at-home father masculinities in the female-dominated caregiving community*

Drawing on my multiple interviews with twenty-two stay-at-home fathers (SAHFs), this paper presents how SAHFs cope with childcare and emotional issues, to reveal how they make sense of their SAHF identity in relation to their changing perceptions of women and femininities in contemporary China. Investigating interconnections between this emerging gendered identity and changing social expectations around gender roles is necessary, as it contributes significant new perspectives to the discursive and subjective production of gender difference and hierarchy in China. However, current research on SAHFs has been predominantly situated in the Global North, and the impact of SAHFs’ subjective experiences on their changing perceptions of masculinities in relation to femininities remains largely unexamined. My analysis of SAHFs’ attitudes toward seeking childcare support and sharing their emotional vulnerability in the female-dominated caregiving community therefore explains how different SAHFs position themselves in relation to conventional gendered norms. Furthermore, I incorporate SAHFs’ development of self-reflexivity into the analysis of their ongoing identity-making process, as it has emerged particularly in my second encounters with some of the interviewees. This analytical approach challenges the binary conception of SAHFs either “by choice” or “by circumstances/necessity” that is highlighted by many extant studies. My discussion offers a more nuanced understanding of how SAHFs continue to affirm the power and privilege associated with notions of hegemonic masculinity in their practices, which, however, are subject to change when assuming the role upon self-reflections and can therefore produce transformative possibilities of achieving a more equal gender dynamic within the Chinese family.

JACOBS, Henry (Harvard University)

*Serenading the Spirits: Divination and Musical Culture in the Late Shang*

What role do music and dance play in Late Shang (1200-1046 BCE) sacrificial economy and the structuring of human-spirit relations? Forty years after its publication, Tong Kin-Woon’s ‘Shang Musical Instruments’(1983-4) remains the only book-length work in any language to attempt a full reconstruction of Late Shang music. This lacuna is remarkable for two reasons. Firstly, although Chinese (Xu Jinxiong 許進雄1968; Song Zhenhao 宋镇豪 2010), Japanese (Akatsuka Kiyoshi 赤塚忠 1977) and English-language (Keightley 2000) monographs consistently omit music from their respective ritual reconstructions, musical divinations are found ubiquitously in the oracle bone record. Secondly, musical instruments represent some of the precious few excavated artifacts routinely discussed in Shang oracle bone inscriptions, providing a valuable interface between material and palaeographic lines of evidence. In this paper, I draw on the Chinese Book Company’s recently published ‘Yinxu Oracle Bone Digital Database’ (Yinxu Jiaguwen shuju ku 殷墟甲骨文數據庫) – the largest digital oracle bone database currently available - as well as new archaeological data to investigate the role of music in Shang human-spirit relations. While we tend to assume music in ancient societies followed conventional forms, with specific, premediated performances accompanying specific sacrificial ceremonies, almost every element of Shang musical performance – instrument types, the use of an ‘ancestor’s instrument,’ the number of dancers, and the performance location - was subject to divination, suggesting musical performances were devised ad hoc and performed ex tempore to accommodate capricious supernatural tastes.

JENCO, Leigh (London School of Economics)

*Validity and the Cult of Qing (Passion) in Late Ming Poetic Criticism*

The literature of the late Ming dynasty (roughly 1550-1644) is often characterized as obsessed with authenticity (*zhen*真), typically understood as an overwhelming preoccupation with self-realization and spontaneous expression of emotions (*qing* 情) through literary production, especially poetry. In this paper I try to show that debates over “authenticity” in late Ming poetic theory intervened in more than simply questions over genre or expression. Insofar as expression of the authentic was tied closely to the particularity of individual experience of truth, the communication of what was “authentic” also become implicated in questions of accuracy and precision in validating a shared reality external to the individual who experienced it. I focus in particular on the poetic theory of Li Zhi and those in his circle, including Gong’an school writers such as Yuan Hongdao and Jiang Yingke, who explicitly examined the relationship between authenticity and emotions by arguing for a “real poetry” that by definition engaged with the external world and sought to heighten observational awareness of it. Their poetic theory thus attended carefully to valid presentation of the external world—including both its contingencies, and its perceived consistencies—even if it tended to foreground the subject-position of the observer. In doing so, their theory meaningfully contributes to theoretical enquiry about the validity of empirical observation, a topic more often associated with the history of science than with literature.

KUNG, Kaby Wing-Sze (Hong Kong Metropolitan University)

*Recreating the Archetype of White Snake through Amnesia in Chinese Animation*

The legend of the White Snake is undeniably one of the most famous Chinese folktales and has been widely adapted into different forms of performance and media presentations. However, the first Chinese animation of this famous folktale only emerged in the animation film *White Snake* (白蛇, directed by Amp Wong and Zhao Ji, 2019). Unlike previous adaptations of the legend, which focused on the love story between Bai Suzhen (White Snake) and Xu Xuan, the animated adaptation rewrites the legend by adding a prequel to the well-known folktale. The original storyline set in the Southern Song dynasty is pushed back to show the lives of Xu Xuan and White Snake in late Tang dynasty before the start of their romance. In this past life, White Snake is an assassin who fails to assassinate the general of the late Tang dynasty and loses her memory during her mission. She is rescued by Xu Xuan, a snake catcher, and embarks on a journey to complete her mission and recall her memory with Xu’s assistance.

The highlight of the animation is White Snake’s memory loss, which provides a new perspective to reinterpret the famous archetype of White Snake in traditional Chinese folktale. This paper aims to elucidate how the animated version of the legend reshapes the image of White Snake from a femme fatale to a woman warrior through a journey of self-discovery.

LAI, Yung-Hang (Independent Scholar)

*Lydia Shum: A Case of Lovable Plus-size Comedienne in Hong Kong*

Comediennes in contemporary Chinese-language cinema have received less attention compared to their male counterparts, leading to an underexplored area. In Hong Kong comedy films, most successful actors and filmmakers are male, while comediennes often take supporting roles. I argue that Lydia Shum (1945-2008), who took central roles in many TV and film comedies during the 1980-90s, was a significant comedy star in Hong Kong film history and her star image negotiates gender stereotypes. While her comedic appeal may seemingly stem from her overweight body, her fatness does not merely relegate her to being a target of ridicule. Instead, she held a respected position in the industry and was affectionately known as the "Happy Fruit." Therefore, I suggest that Shum's positive portrayal as a beloved "fat comedienne" challenges the prevailing notion that a plus-size female body in comedic roles implies derogatory, non-conforming, and disruptive depictions of women. Shum's characters frequently play with those representations, enhancing her cheerful and adorable image. Amidst the growing presence of positive portrayals of plus-size women in Hollywood comedies and the advancement of the "body positivity" movement, it is essential to examine Shum's performance and celebrity image within the specific historical context. By examining Shum's roles as "fat mother" in the *It's A Mad, Mad, Mad World* series (1987-1992), I argue that her characters humorously engage with the shared desires and anxieties of Hong Kong residents leading up to the 1997 handover to China.

LAGIEWSKA, Magdalena (University of Gdańsk)

*China’s Draft Law on Artificial Intelligence: A Game-Changer?*

Chinese authorities eagerly introduce many modern technologies. On the other hand, Chinese society also seeks to benefit from such innovations. One must note, however, that Chinese Internet regulator, namely the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC), has recently proposed law (the so-called draft Administrative Measures for Generative Artificial Intelligence Services) according to which makers of new artificial intelligence (AI) would have to go through the security assessments prior to sharing publicly new products. Interestingly, the law prohibits any forms of discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, race, gender, among others. In addition, the AI cannot provide any false information as a result of its work. The aim of this research is to address the proposed solutions concerning the emergence of generative AI in China and outline the future of innovative technologies in this country. Even though this is merely a draft law, it would significantly shape the future of AI in China. Nonetheless, this begs the question of whether this draft law would be a game-changer in developing AI in China. How will it impact the functioning of China-based tech-companies across the country? This analysis brings us to the conclusion that Chinese authorities seek to introduce fully developed legal framework for AI functioning to better control the market.

LEE, Seung-joon (National University of Singapore)

*Chinese People’s Minimum Nutrition Requirements and Rethinking China’s Labor History*

On the eve of the Sino–Japanese War (1937–1945), leading Chinese bioscientists, mostly trained in Western universities, published the *Chinese People’s Minimum Nutrition Requirement*. Their compilation of dietary recommendations was endorsed by the China Medical Association and widely lauded as the most advanced research in the field of China’s modern nutrition studies. Yet its publication strengthened the conviction of what historian Jia-chen Fu terms the “idea of food-as-fuel.” Wartime authorities, in turn, recognized nutrition studies as the cornerstone of the wartime promotion of national health and defense of food security because China needed to optimize all available resources for the nationwide war effort, following the same logic as thermal efficiency—minimal energy input for maximal output.

By placing food at the core of the paradigm shift from the history of biopolitics to the history of energy, this project argues, first, that the emergence of new perceptions of food, catalyzed by the publication of the *Chinese People’s Minimum*, helped the wartime state’s efforts to reframe food as one of the energy resources for maximal mobilization. Second, its repercussions did not cease with the war’s end; rather, they continued and culminated beyond the revolutionary regime change in 1949. Third, the intellectual origin of the *Chinese People’s Minimum* was surprisingly far from the sense of a wartime imperative; instead, its origin was deeply rooted in the peaceful, liberal, and even progressive global atmosphere that once swept the world in the cooperative interwar period.

LEI, Yuhong (Lancaster University)

*An investigation on academic procrastination among Chinese undergraduate students*

Studies show that approximately 90%- 95% of students procrastinate on tasks at university (Steel, 2007). Researchers examining the impact of COVID-19 reported a decrease in study hours and increased academic procrastination among university students. I reviewed the current literature on academic procrastination among university students; this phenomenon or behaviour is mainly investigated from cognitive and behavioural perspectives, which adopt the psychological approach and survey-based measurement. Researchers mainly focus on the types, causes and impacts of academic procrastination. Excluding those students who are not procrastinators, researchers divided into two primary forms of procrastinators, active and passive (Chu & Choi, 2005).

However, researchers indicate that academic procrastination is a highly complex human behaviour which involves a combination of affective, cognitive, and behavioural components and cannot be summarised easily (Steel, 2007). This study agrees that academic procrastination is a highly complex human behaviour. The behaviour of students who delay their tasks is not only from students’ internal and individual reasons; there are far more reasons from social and environmental factors. In addition, the current literature on academic procrastination mainly focuses on Western university students. Therefore, this study will be phenomenological research to investigate academic procrastination among Chinese undergraduates from the angle of social practice. This study will analyse thirty semi-structured interview data, and thus investigate it from a broader level by involving the social practice angle to challenge the current classification and explanation of academic procrastination and expand academic procrastination into Chinese undergraduates’ learning approaches and experiences.

LI, Erjia. (University of Glasgow)

*The artistic connection between rubbings and stone inscriptions: the inscribed Sūtra at Hongding mountain*

In this paper, a different interpretation of materiality is examined, which demonstrates how rubbings serve as a bridge between engraved stone inscriptions and calligraphic works that use these inscriptions and their rubbings as the focal point. The original calligraphy, created using stone carvings, was preserved. Rubbings were then used to transmit the art of stone carving. These rubbings not only enhance the significance of stone sculptures as important monuments and ceremonial objects, but also embody their artistic style. Through the existence of aged rubbings, a new form of calligraphy was developed, in which calligraphers were indirectly involved in the recreation of stone carving art. By exploring how the literati utilized rubbings to transform materials, we can understand the crucial importance of constantly refreshing the connection between paper and stone. As such, rubbings not only offer a gateway to ancient inscriptions, but also act as an intermediary for their transfer.

The rubbings, although they remove geographical barriers, fail to accurately represent the natural placement of the carved inscriptions and their relationship to the surrounding architecture and landscape. This separation from the original context diminishes the religious and historical significance of the stone carving. Therefore, this paper aims to explore an alternative perspective on materiality, by examining the stone inscriptions and their rubbings as a means of linking engraved stone inscriptions to calligraphic works, and the different artistic perceptions that arise from their material forms and visual properties.

LI, Hui (King’s College London)

*Neurasthenia on Film: Neurological Diseases, Medical Discourse and Film Representations Before and After the Founding of the PRC*

How can we analyse the changing discourse of psychiatric disease in China before and after 1949 through cinema? This paper will try to give an answer to this question by focusing on neurasthenia and exploring how it is differently represented in two films, *Small Town Spring*(小城之春, 1948) and *Become a Young Man Again*(返老还童, 1958). As an invention of modern Western psychiatric science in the late 19th century, neurasthenia was introduced to China via Japan in the early 20th century and gained prevalence with the development of the print media, becoming a commonly understood and daily used lexicon for urban Chinese, as well as a frequent object of literary and artistic representation. The history of neurasthenia in China was influenced by the development of modern neurology in the West, but also developed its own alternative history. While the popularity of neurasthenia in the West declined in the 1940s, the disease was still commonly found on hospital diagnosis lists in the newly established socialist China and was given official attention as one of the main threats to the health of the people. There are already many pieces of well-established research on the relationship between neurasthenia and popular culture, especially with literature and advertising. However, there is still a gap in the field of Chinese film studies on the topic of neurasthenia. I hope that my research will fill this gap.

LI, Jingyi (University of Edinburgh)

*Dominance and liberation: The Chinese experience of learning and teaching in UK universities*

China is an increasingly major source country for international students globally. In 2022, 22.3% of international students in UK universities came from China (HESA, 2023).

In the meantime, in day-to-day practice, it is observed a ‘discourse of concern’ has been raised by both staff and students on the impact of having a large proportion of Chinese students in PGT classrooms on the learning and teaching in UK universities. These ‘concerns often are around Chinese students’ (lack of) engagement in class, which is also reflected in policies and practices that view international students with a deficit lens.

While recognising the racial injustice undertone of the discourse described, this research investigates how Chinese students at the postgraduate level navigate international classrooms in UK universities and explore reasons beyond English language ability that shape students’ engagement.

The author argues that Chinese students’ experiences need to be understood in a neoliberal and postcolonial context, as well as the global geopolitical landscape. The findings suggest that students are sophisticated code switchers and draw on different strategies when (dis) engaging with topics perceived as controversial or sensitive in learning spaces. It is, therefore, important to recognise the intersectional diversity of students in an international classroom, which leads to the fluidity of safe and brace space in classroom learning.

LI, Shichong (University of Leeds)

*Does ‘less advantaged’ mean less agency?: contrasting Chinese left-behind children’s intersectionality and agency*

This paper aims to contrast Chinese left-behind children’s intersectionality and their agency in order to shift the research paradigm (Ge et al., 2019). As previously, the negative outcomes of parental migration are overarching (Zhang, 2016). However, I think drawing theories in sociology of childhood become imperative considering the insufficient focus on children’s perspectives in LBC research field.

Children demonstrate competence or capacity as agency to take the initiative while facing social constraints (Valentine, 2011). While, the intersectionality reveals diverse disadvantaged identities intersect with each other following with multiple drawbacks (Crenshaw, 1991) .Labels have been created to differentiate LBC in different situations (Ge et al., 2019). Gender also shapes the impact of parental migration on LBC (Hu, 2016). So, I argue that researching intersectionality of LBC is also trackable. I argue that in connecting the two concepts, it equips a lens to identify LBC’s multiple social constraints, their marginalized identities and how they react to it.

I found that LBC have been aware of their different parental migration status, their parental unstable marriage status and the gendered bias they have received in the skip-generation childrearing. In contracting these disadvantages, they do have demonstrated their agency in dealing with adverse situations. Some of them might not have the strength yet to make a difference, the impact of their social interactions with peers makes their relational agency transferable. Empirical data and analysis will be provided to reveal more details.

LI, Peilin (University of Leicester)

*Kangtuan: Student Assassins in Concession*

1939, in Japanese-occupied Tianjin, the manager of the Federal Reserve Bank of China, Cheng Xigeng, was assassinated in a cinema. Cheng played an important role in the Japanese dominating financial system. From the Chinese perspective, he betrayed his nation. The case happened in British concession and made the tense relationship between Japan and the UK even worse. Finally British reluctantly handed over four “suspects” that the Japanese appointed. While none of them really took part in the assassination. They are spies from Juntong (National Bureau of Investigation and Statistics) hidden in British concession. True gunners are a group of students, who called themselves Anti-Japanese Kill-betrayer Group. 1937, the Group was established when Tianjin was first occupied. In this sixty-people group, most of them were younger than twenty, and even pupils. These young terrorists driven by patriotic passion were bored with doing merely propaganda work. They set fire at Japanese warehouses and cinemas playing propaganda films. They attempted to assassin Commissioner of Education and famous litterateur Zhou Zuoren. The chairman of the Tianjin Chamber of Commerce, Wang Zhulin also dead under their guns. After the spies were handed over, intelligence leaks seriously damaged the Group. The members either captured or fled to the home front. The results of the Group action, even compared to Juntong, were remarkable. To answer the question of why they could achieve those, this research will focus on their connections with local social networks.

LI, Wenzhu (University of Alberta)

*The Assemblage of Desire, Power, and Subjectivity in People’s Republic of Desire*

The documentary People’s Republic of Desire, directed by Hao Wu, offers a nuanced look into the world of live streaming in China, particularly on the YY platform. The film has been widely praised for its insightful examination of how live streaming has emerged as a dominant form of entertainment in China, providing young people from rural or lower-income backgrounds with an opportunity to escape poverty and gain fame and fortune through digital technology. However, some reviewers argue that the film perpetuates social and economic oppression while exploring the ways in which digital technologies challenge existing forms of inequality. Through the lens of the assemblage thinking, I contend that the film challenges such critiques by rejecting the binary logic of identity and instead presenting a complex web of interactions between technology, social media, and the post-socialist economic structure. The film refrains from reinscribing the performers’ “performative” body into essentialist notions of gender, class, identity, and subjectivity, and instead calls for critical examination of the ways in which these assemblages interact to create a digital world that challenges traditional forms of inequality.

LI, Yang (Ghent University)

*The KMT’s Shifting Approach to the Outside World during the 1920s: Reinvention of Chinese Confucianism*

In the 1920s, the foreign policy of the KMT rapidly evolved as it managed to reunite most of China from its southern Canton base through the Northern Expedition (Beifa 北伐, 1926–1928). Departing from KMT founder Sun Yat-Sen’s ‘Three Principles of the People; which promoted “Allying with Soviet Russia” (lian’e 聯俄), the foreign policy focus of his successor Chiang Kai-shek shifted to the West around 1927. As most KMT leaders had received a traditional Confucian education during the late Qing dynasty, this study aims to explore the reintroduction of Confucianism in the Party’s shifting foreign policy during the 1920s. This research will, among others, use archival and other primary sources such as Chiang Kai-shek’s diary and the memoirs of his contemporaries to analyse the correlation between traditional Confucianism and the evolutions of the KMT’s foreign policy in the 1920s.

LI, Zheng (Newcastle University)

*Forging a United Female Community: Social Mobilisation, Emotional Labour, and Everydayness in a Women’s Battlefield Service Corps, 1937-1938*

Existing scholarship extensively discusses women’s activism during the War of Resistance, highlighting their participation in a variety of wartime organisations, including underground and espionage groups, literary societies in Shanghai and Wuhan, and political associations of both the KMT and the CCP. Women from different backgrounds demonstrated unity by setting aside partisan and personal biases, harnessing their strengths in the pursuit of national salvation. However, while elite women have received significant attention, little focus has been given to ordinary women’s communities and their initial efforts to unite and negotiate at the onset of the war.

Drawing upon diaries and working reports, this paper examines the Hunan Women’s Battlefield Service Corps, an all-female community organised by former soldier Xie Bingying in September 1937. Accompanying an official army on the East Front, the corps provided soldiers with medical care and emotional relief. It also served as an intimate space where women gathered across geographical distances to defend their state and empower themselves. The members left behind dozens of war diaries that recorded their daily activities and reflections, extending well beyond the structures provided by a party-political perspective.

Nicole Barnes’s analysis of NRA nurses in the construction of modern China informs this paper’s basic premise. Nonetheless, this paper diverges from Barnes’s focus on forming modern subjects, asking how women on the frontlines confronted ‘crisis femininity’ following the traumatic lesson of the female cadet team during the Northern Expedition. This paper posits that the women’s corps represented a combination of military discipline and intimate sisterhood that gave women a sense of security and mutual respect, in which female role models motivated latecomers to voice themselves. Despite the exploitation of their emotional labour within nationalist narratives, members transformed the vocabulary of female heroism and utilised silence as a communicative element in and of itself to enrich further female voices.

LIANG, Hongling (University of Glasgow)

*Title: Educating Chinese Workers in World War I France: A Comparative Study of The Chinese Workers Journal (華工雜誌) and The YMCA Chinese Workers' Weekly (基督教青年會駐法華工週報)*

This paper explores the educational initiatives implemented for Chinese workers in France during World War I, with a focus on two significant publications. The Société Franco Chinoise d'Éducation (華法教育會), founded by Chinese anarchists in France, played a vital role in promoting education among Chinese workers, publishing the *Chinese Workers Journal* (華工雜誌) from January 1917 to December 1920. Concurrently, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) played a pivotal role in supporting the workers' welfare, offering a comprehensive education program that included entertainment, letter-writing services, and religious instruction. As part of their educational endeavours, the YMCA published the *YMCA Chinese Workers' Weekly* (基督教青年會駐法華工週報) from January 1919 to January 1920. This paper aims to compare the content, objectives, and impact of these two publications, namely the *Huagong zazhi* and *Huagong zhoubao*, highlighting their significance in facilitating the educational development and empowerment of Chinese workers during wartime France. The study reveals that despite the YMCA's non-involvement in politics, their education projects emphasised patriotism and citizenship. In contrast, the *Huagong Zazhi* offered an educational vision with a lesser emphasis on nationhood or nation-building, presenting a unique perspective on education that emphasises the connection between autonomous individuals and their roles as society members, transcending the boundaries of the nation-state.

LIN, Ruihua (National Quemoy University)

*Effect of China’s United Front Work towards Taiwan under Top-Level Design: A Case Study of Fujian*

This paper is aimed to interpret the reasons for unsatisfied effect through huge efforts on China Communist Party’s (CCP) United-Front strategy against Taiwan under Xi Jingpin’s leadership. CCP’s Strategy has been shifted from “patronage benefits to Taiwan’s people” to “facilitate preferential measures for Taiwanese to foster in China”. With the purpose of solid implementation, CCP take the “Top-Level Design” and designated Fujian as a policy experimental province. I conducted long-term research in Fujian from 2016 to 2019 and interviewed more than 70 local officials and Taiwanese businessmen/Taiwanese youth. This research found that the local government didn’t succeed to implement the policies, one the one hand, there were limits for autonomic innovation and experiment, one the other hand, the priorities for local officials were rather local economic development than Taiwan-related works. Therefore, in the circumference of limited autonomy and sufficient options, the local government indeed handle the United front against Taiwan as a showcase for superiors, instead of effective policy implementation.

LIU, Yaxi (University of Oxford)

*Japanese modern convenience in China, 1979-1993*

Electric washers increasingly made their way into Chinese urban families between the mid-1970s and the early 1990s as an indispensable part of modern living. This paper investigates the technological domestication and acculturation of Japanese home appliances in the People’s Republic of China (PRC). In the wake of the cultural revolution, Japanese “white goods” spread from Hong Kong to China’s mainland, and head-starting provinces such as Guangdong, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang competed to trail-produce washing machines by imitating Japanese models bought from Hong Kong. Following the early 1980s when electric washers became one of the “three major home appliances” along with TVs and refrigerators, Japanese technologies have upgraded over 30 production lines for washing machine factories scattered throughout the PRC; functional automation and material plasticization aided in the development of twin-tub washing machines and their availability to urban families. Employing a case study on the Goldfish washing machines that were produced in Zhejiang, this paper aims to answer how producers, distributors, and users accommodated Japanese models and technologies in their visions of modern living, what tensions were created by technological domestication and acculturation, and how the tensions were handled. These concerns pertain to understanding vernacular modernism unfolded in both production and consumption. Assembling scattered sources such as advice literature, mass media, product instructions, published memoirs, advertisements, and a film, this paper analyzes the evolutionary trajectory of modern convenience and aims to contribute a local reference to understand the transcultural travels of everyday technologies.

LIU, Zheng (University of Erlangen–Nuremberg)

*When Correlative Thinking Meets Divination Techniques—The Juxtaposition of Sinological Analysis and Ethnographic Account*

Correlative thinking is a philosophical and technical concept, that originated in the thought of the Chinese divination system and is laid down in one of the oldest cardinal works, explicitly in the “Great Commentary” in *Yijing*. Marcel Granet exams correlative thinking through: Time and Space, Yin and Yang, Numbers and the Dao. The entities of Time and Space, Yin and Yang, and Numbers are, according to Granet, “divinatory emblems”.

This project will show how correlative thinking helps to capture the practical logic that guides the divinatory system. Based on my fieldwork since 2013, the ethnographic accounts will show how *Yijing* knowledge and the divination techniques based or derived from it were transmitted within the *Yijing* community in mainland China by a professional diviner to his students, how correlative thinking was explained as the theoretical foundation of divination, and how it was applied in divination practice.

The goal of this project is to establish a dialog between anthropology and sinology about correlative thinking and its application in divination. I will trace the convoluted academic introduction of correlative thinking by Marcel Granet and the contemporary divination-oriented explanation of correlative thinking by a professional diviner, which has led me to explain the analytical framework and theoretical agenda of the juxtaposition of sinological analysis and ethnographic inquiry to convey the interwoven concepts of correlative thinking and *Yijing* and the divination practices based on them.

LO, Lan (University of Nottingham), LIN, Xia (Toynbee Hall)

*Chinese women in transnational relationship and marriage migration in the time of pre-and post-pandemic in Nottingham and London, UK*

This paper presents a joint research study involving ten couples in two British cities: Nottingham and London in UK that were interviewed to explore their transnational relationships, families, and experiences of marriage migration. This paper explores the following research questions in the context of Chinese women’s transnational relationship and marriage migration to the UK:

1, What are the culturally situated understandings and experiences of intimate citizenship between Chinese women and their partners?

2. How do Chinese women negotiate perceived cultural, national, and ethnic differences within their relationships?

3. How does transnational migration shape their experiences of intimacy, and vice versa?

This project uses a qualitative approach. The paper will set out the main findings from the data in areas of such as cultural differences, maintaining spousal relationships, transnational family ties, and employment issues. We will also define the future direction of travel of the research which will explore the extent to which these findings remain constant or have changed in the post-pandemic world. To this end, the original participants will be reinterviewed using the same methods as during the pre-pandemic phase. Our working assumptions are that the main difference will be in the area of employment issues and possibility in terms of maintaining spousal relationships. We predict at this stage that there will be fewer changes in relation to transnational family ties and cultural differences. This paper is original in three main ways: firstly, its focus on Chinese migrant women; secondly, its methodology and thirdly, its pre and post-pandemic comparative focus.

LO, Lan (University of Nottingham), PINCHBECK, Michael (Manchester Metropolitan University)

*Talking Trees/树说/述说: A mindful journey to the East in the time of pandemic and post-pandemic*

This paper presents a collaborative research project that provides students from the University of Nottingham (UoN) with the opportunity to ‘Journey to the East’ without travelling. It was devised in collaboration between Dr Lan Lo (UoN) and Dr Michael Pinchbeck (MMU) during the Covid-19 pandemic as an alternative to study placement for students taking Chinese on university degree programmes. It was designed to address these students’ language and cultural study needs in the context of lockdown and restrictions on international travel, including to China.

The project, *Talking Trees/树说/述说*, involves a living archive of stories listened to by downloading the audio via a QR code and experenced at, and between, trees. The stories explore the notion of roots/routes and how trees have grown over time as a metaphor for migration and belonging. One tree represents the idea of ‘leaving home’ while the other tree represents the idea of ‘arriving home’.

At each of the two trees, a Tree of Heaven and Gingko Biloba, which were orignally inported from China, visitors hear verbatim interviews with Chinese speakers on a range of relevant themes. The voices were provided by international students from a range of backgrounds. A fictional narrative drawn from archival research and images explores the journey the trees might have taken from China to the UK, how they might be talking to each other and what they might say. This fictional narrative frames the interviews and forms an audio trail between the trees for visitors to follow.

LOU, Loretta I.T. (Durham University)

*Preservation by demolition: Toxic heritage in contemporary China*

This chapter explores how residents in a Chinese neighbourhood bargained with their ‘toxic heritage’. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted between the spring and autumn of 2018, the chapter details how the villagers of Samtilwei, a periurban neighbourhood adjacent to a polluting petrochemical plant in southern China, tried to maximize their financial gains through the double act of destroying and remaking their toxic heritage. In exploring how villagers tactically mobilised the idea of ‘preservation’ to retain their intangible connections to the villages while making justifications for demolishing their tangible estates, I unravel the implications of this peculiar phenomenon of ‘preservation by demolition’ for heritage studies.

LUO, Moxuan (The University of Hong Kong,)

*The Evolution and Political Imagination of "Wu Hu Jiang"(五虎將) in Ming and Qing Fictions*

"Wu Hu Jiang"(五虎將) is a common group of characters in Ming and Qing fictions, appearing in a wide range of genres including historical fictions, heroic fictions, and fictions of Gods and Demons. The investigation of "Wu Hu Jiang" can be carried out in four dimensions: transformation, shape, spirit, and function. In terms of transformation, "Wu Hu Jiang" originated from historical novels, and they were also spread in heroic novels, as well as in novels about gods and demons and chivalry, gradually becoming a unique cultural memory during this process. In terms of shape, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms(《三國演義》)* is the blueprint for later novels to portray the "Wu Hu Jiang", with both connections and differences between them. In terms of spirit, "Wu Hu Jiang" embody the political imagination of an ideal monarch-subject relationship and a picture of a clear and peaceful world, forming a unique heroic aesthetic. In terms of function, "Wu Hu Jiang" have two main roles: thematic interpretation and commercial effect. The above discussion reflects the distinction between historical novels and heroic novels, and also presents two paths of novel creation: literati creation and folk creation. As representatives of the heroic group, "Wu Hu Jiang" together with individual heroes constitute the "Heroic Literary Ecology" in Chinese classical popular fiction, opening new perspectives for Chinese novel studies.

LU, Chen-Ni (National Chengchi University)

*Social Media, A Field of Arts Market: A Case Study of Taiwan’s Sunflower Movement*

Since Facebook was launched, the world has been encountering a series of media revolution. However, the importance of Facebook has advanced since Arab Spring. As citizens were empowered by social media, the way social movement organised has been changed. Instead of investigating the role social media playing, the researcher is interested in the aesthetic meaning inside the emerging social phenomenon. This research conducts a case occurred in Taiwan in 2014, showing how the youths suffering from unemployment crisis and labeled as ‘lost generation’ through Facebook accumulating social capital. The protagonist of this social media revolution was Sunflower Student Movement, which was organised by anxious young people meeting multiple types of pressures including the tension between national identity and economic development. The study finds that first, a new mode of cultural economy was appearing. Second, a novel arts movement is found, i.e. *Interpretivism*. Third, social media users are the main workforce in the new cultural economy which is associated with *Interpretivism*. Meanwhile, digital canvas, a metaphor to depict the nature of Facebook timeline, is regarded as a kind of cultural product containing social capital that was transacted through arts marketing strategies in this economy. In conclusion, although the study focuses on an old case, it is still significant. As this is one of the most important cases in the Chinese world. Even the recent social movement, namely A4 movement that occurred in China, to a certain extent, was related to the way the youths use social media.

MA, Shawna (Shuyang) (The University of Sydney)

*Chinese Lion Dancing Performances in Sydney: A Case Study*

Much research has been done by scholars about traditional Chinese performances (hereafter TCP) overseas using the terms “cultural integration” and “transformation” to describe the development of TCP in the Chinese diaspora and their deviation form. Their original forms in China were under the influence of the mainstream culture and performing arts of the host country. This paper presents a case study of TCP performed by the Sydney-based Chinese Youth League Lion Dance and Dragon Dance Australia (CYLLADDA) with a view to tracking and illustrating the developmental trajectory of the Chinese lion dance in Sydney over half a century from the end of the White Australian policy in 1973 to 2023. Based on archive research, participant observation and personal interviews, the paper argues that the transformation Chinese lion dance has undergone over the past fifty years reflects and responds to the challenge of changes in society and environment and the demands of audiences of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds in Australia – now a vibrant, multicultural country. The paper concludes that the interactions between Chinese immigrants and natives in multicultural Australia facilitate the localisation of the Chinese lion dance in Sydney.

MA, Zhihao (University of York), CAO, Yujue (University of York), ZHOU, Zelong (University of Essex)

*Legitimacy, Loyalty and Solidarity: The Functions of Political Rituals in Xi's China*

Building upon the charismatic authority, the People's Republic of China under Mao Zedong created a "political religion", using political rituals to strengthen its governance. In the post-Mao era, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been stripped off political religion signs and weakened the roles of rituals in public affairs. Nonetheless, political rituals are still embedded in Chinese people's daily life, from flag-raising ceremonies at schools to mass parades on the National Day. Especially after Xi Jinping took office, the significance of political rituals has been constantly emphasized by the CCP again. In the past decade of Xi's tenure, the CCP has held three mass parades, established a series of oath ceremonies, gradually standardized and ritualized party activities, Etc. However, current scholarship fails to systematically summarize the typology of political rituals and explain the characteristics and functions of political rituals in Xi's China via empirical research. After critically reviewing the existing literature, this article innovatively proposes a well-developed typology of political rituals in current China. Furthermore, by using auto-photography and in-depth semi-structured interviews, this article reveals the three main functions of political rituals in Xi's China. It contributes to the literature on the theoretical development of political rituals in China based on empirical evidence.

MAZZILLI, Mary (University of Essex)

*Exophony, Translation, and Transnationalism in Sinophone contemporary writers*

Sinophone writers such as novelists Dai Sijie, who writes in French, Lulu Wang, and Gong Yuhong, who write in Dutch, Guo Xiaolu, who writes in English, Nobel Laureate, Gao Xingjian, who also writes in French, have written in languages other than their own.

“Translingual writing” (Kellman 2000) and exophony are the terms being used to

define writers writing in a language other than their primary language, and scholars have debated whether translation actually occurs in the writing process itself.

Responding to the lack of detailed and comprehensive scholarship on Sinophone writers’ translingual/exophonic writing, this paper will contribute to the debate on translation, with the argument that authors writing in more than one language, or writing in a language other than their own, challenge the idea of an original version of a text and promote a form of transnationalism (postdramatic transnationalism), making a political standpoint. Focusing on Sinophone writers, this paper contends that transnationalism as a political standpoint is especially true for some of Sinophone writers, who in name of cultural freedom have left China relocating in Western countries.

Most importantly, it is equating transnationalism (rather than translingualism) and writing/translation processes that will help unveil the volatile nature of cultural and linguistic identity, by exploring the processes of linguistic and cultural assimilation, and linguistic contamination (De Donno 2021), as embedded in the writing/translation of these authors.

MCGEE, Nicholas (Durham University)

*Suffering and Sovereignty: Two Imperial Visions of Diaspora between Sumatra and Australia*

This paper juxtaposes two remarkable imperial investigations into the diasporic Chinese communities of the Asia-Pacific in the 1880s. At a crucial moment in the history of Chinese immigration Qing and British imperial officials undertook separate missions to investigate the conditions of the vast Chinese diaspora across Southeast Asia and Oceania at almost the same time. These were the official investigation undertaken by the specially appointed Qing Commissioners Wang Ronghe and Yu Qiong, and the unofficial mission undertaken by the translator, Sinologist, and diplomat Edward Harper Parker. Both missions engaged with the most contentious Chinese migration questions of the era, in particular the brutal exploitation of trafficked Chinese workers in the tobacco plantations of Deli, on Dutch controlled Sumatra, and the rising tide of white supremacist efforts to exclude Chinese migrants from British Australia. Ultimately, both missions also generated what were the most comprehensive surveys of Chinese life and labour across the region hitherto produced. Using Chinese, British, Dutch, and Australian sources, this paper reconstructs these two journeys into diaspora, comparing and contrasting their experiences and conclusions. Focusing in particular on the flash points of Sumatra and Australia, this paper will explore the ways in which the sufferings of migrant Chinese communities were narrated, and how they were differentially mobilized to argue for dramatic changes the two empires’ visions of sovereignty over China’s diaspora.

MCLEAN-MELCHOR, Lindsey (University of Granada)

*Woman-Author, Woman-Subject: (Auto)biographical trends in non-fictional literature (2002-2019) by Chinese-British author Xue Xinran 薛欣然 (1958--)*

Many women creators, artists, performers, writers, or scholars consciously choose to create from a ‘self’ delineated by their gender identity, in this case, a female ‘self’ (Donnell & Polkey, 2000). Historically, female subjects of (auto)biography have not enjoyed the same renown as male subjects, not due to a lack of achievement on their part, but rather to the lack of attention paid by historians to “those kind of achievements” (Alpern *et al*., 1992). Feminist (auto)biography is essential, not only in restoring ‘invisible’ women to official history, but also in questioning the traditional standards on which (auto)biography has been built, defined, and validated (Stanley, 1993). (Auto)biographical literature is personal and subjective. In these creations, it is frequent that the biographical ‘self’ and the autobiographical ‘self’ overlap (Stanley, 1993). If “the personal is political” (Haraway, 1991), one person’s unique, independent, personal life experience can be positioned as an example of the common public experience shared by many (in this case, women), creating a safe, free-of-judgment, non-physical ‘room’ of our own, known as ‘sisterhood’. Contemporary Chinese-British journalist and author Xue Xinran 薛欣然 (1958--) is estimated to have collected stories from 400 Chinese women in 40 years (Xinran, 2019). Via examples extracted from her nonfiction works (2002-2019), this paper explores the following questions: How does (auto)biographical writing change when the author/subject’s gender-identity changes? Why is feminist (auto)biography important? Where are the boundaries between the voice of ‘woman-author’ and that of ‘woman-subject’? What are the benefits of this non-physical space called ‘sisterhood’?

MENG, Huili (Fudan University, China)

*Gendered Desire, the Imperfect Mind and Mature Body - Take the ‘Oral History of the Special Olympics in China (2016-2021)’ project as an example*

As one of the translators, the author was inspired by the ‘Oral History of the Special Olympics in China' (2016-2021), which threw a profound light on the personal and family lives of a group of intellectually disabled athletes who participated in the ‘Shanghai Special Olympics’ (or other Special Olympics related activities and events) in 2007.

As a marginalised group, mentally disabled people have rarely been seen by the outside world for many years in China and beyond: the traditional research about them usually lacks attention and interest. According to the Press and academic publishing network of CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) database, there are some papers that explore the development of the social benefits system, the special education system, vocational education, and the relation with Special Olympics, but very few papers discuss marriage and partnership issues. Similarly, hardly any papers document the families’ debates about their future desires and dreams of marriage and children.

This paper is re-visiting the valuable oral history testimonies from the project to explore these stories from a gender perspective using context and discourse analysis to explain their desire for intimate relationships; the conflicts between parents and children; and the family debate behind these issues, especially from this unique set of first-hand interviews. Altogether 34 people and their families were represented, revealing their thoughts about relationships and their private concerns about disabilities; the general and personal difficulties in their everyday life, and also an exploration of their matrimonial desires and thoughts of future families.

MULVEY, Benjamin (University of Glasgow)

*The post-graduation mobility plans of African international students in China*

There were around 82,000 Africans studying in Chinese universities in 2018, meaning China is now among the most popular destination countries for globally mobile African students. In this paper I focus on the onward trajectory of these students, exploring how regimes of mobility, both within China and globally, structure the agency of these temporary migrants. The paper draws on data from interviews with 45 international students and recent graduates from across the African continent, as well as policy texts and interviews with international office staff in Chinese universities. I draw on Bourdieu’s *theory of practice* to explore how these students plan for post-graduation mobility, strategising to overcome structural barriers to mobility and cultural capital accumulation. I argue that China’s position within the contemporary global political economy is reflected in the ways these student migrants navigate intersecting global mobility regimes. Moving beyond the ‘stay/return’ binary common in student mobility research, the paper delineates three post-study trajectories: returnees, deterred by structural barriers from staying in the host country; those who stay in China, overcoming these barriers by opening businesses, with plans to return home later; and those who plan to accumulate capital in China to meet the requirements of more stringent mobility regimes in the Global North. I also seek to draw out some potential consequences of the growth of China as a destination for African international students for China’s soft power gambit in Africa, and for socio-economic development in students’ respective home countries.

MULVEY, Benjamin (University of Glasgow) and LI, Boya (Western Sydney University)

*The intellectual-state relationship and academic freedom in China: a reappraisal*

Existing academic literature on higher education in China tends to promote an argument that current norms of academic freedom and the broader intellectual-state relationship can be attributed primarily to Chinese political and cultural traditions, particularly Confucian political thought. In this article we seek to provide a reappraisal of the intellectual-state relationship both in Confucian thought and in the present day, challenging the claims made in existing work on three grounds. First, we contend that many of the formulations in current literature on academic freedom in China are more characteristic of imperial China as a whole, rather than Confucianism. We highlight that Confucian political thought is multifaceted: existing literature seeking to link current Chinese understandings of academic freedom to Confucianism presents ‘State Confucianism’, one facet of Confucian thought which is often evoked as a means of justifying contemporary authoritarian rule, as the entire Confucian tradition. At the same time, a more critical strand of Confucian thought with different implications for academic freedom is neglected. Second, we argue this work also seems to ‘soft-pedal’ current restrictions on academic freedom in China, neglecting to mention increasingly pervasive surveillance and narrowing space for dissent, as well as the firing and imprisonment of scholars, as examples. Third, we highlight that existing accounts of academic freedom in China simply serve as an extension of the ‘incompatibility thesis’, and in doing so, engage in historical determinism, reading modern authoritarianism back into Chinese tradition.

NOLAN, Maria (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London)

*Cultivating guanxi in the digital era: perceptions of relationship-building practices among young urban chinese*

Practices of*guanxi*, the Chinese expression of interpersonal connections, have received much attention from anthropologists and sociologists in recent decades. There are few studies however that examine the significance or prevalence of *guanxi* practices among the generations born under market reforms, and who have come of age alongside the growth of social media platforms such as WeChat through which much *guanxi* activity is now cultivated and maintained. This talk is concerned with what *guanxi* means to young urban Chinese today. Drawing from twelve months of ethnographic fieldwork in Chinese cities, I consider dominant perceptions of *guanxi* practices among university students and young professionals. I contextualise these perceptions within the pressurised education and work environments to which urban youths (born after 1990) are accustomed and within which they possess greater personal autonomy and access to “weak” ties than any previous generations of youth. I propose that feelings of cynicism and resignation which can emerge in response to pressure to engage in particular *guanxi* practices have the potential to disrupt and transform the ways in which *guanxi* connections are cultivated and maintained. I argue that taking time to consider the ways in which *guanxi* practices are experienced in affective terms, particularly by youth entering the workforce, can help to ensure a more nuanced understanding of *guanxi* and provide a necessary sensitivity to its shifting forms.

OUYANG, Luodeng (University of Liverpool)

*Locating the ‘Four Noble Truths’ and Karma in Pema Tseden’s films*

With the frequent portrayals of Tibetan Buddhism in Hollywood such as *Little Buddha* (1993) and *Kundun* (1997) since the 1990s, Tibetan culture and religious beliefs have started to attract unprecedented global attention. In recent years, Pema Tseden has emerged in a relatively short period of ten years as one of the most prominent Tibetan cultural figures nationally and internationally. Existing studies on Pema Tseden’s Tibetan Buddhist approach in cinema focus on how Tibetan Buddhist values are being destabilized by the forces of globalization and how he uses Buddhist thoughts to reflect on the Tibetans’ complex socio-political situation. However, rarely are Buddhist concepts applied to examine his cinematic storytelling. This paper focuses on how the Tibetan Buddhist concepts of Karma and the ‘Four Noble Truths’ have influenced Pema Tseden’s storytelling, particularly his films’ narratives, cinematography and mise-en-scène. The films that will be discussed are *Old Dog* (2011), *Tharlo* (2015) and his non-Tibetan language film *Flares Wafting in 1983* (2008). I will argue that the karmic circular structure, the ‘residual and nonresidual cessation of suffering’ from the ‘Four Noble Truths’ play significant roles in his cinematic language in addition to providing a spiritually-informed negotiation of the dilemmas of Tibetans in terms of identity, life, and religious belief in the face of commercialization, and regulations imposed by the Han majority. This research will provide a novel framework for decoding Pema Tseden’s cinematic language through a lens of Tibetan Buddhism.

PAK, Christian (University of Alberta)

*Beyond filiality: Feng Menglong (1574–1646) and “Three Devoted Brothers Win Honour by Yielding Family Property to One Another”*

Confucianism was a crucial philosophy for governance in Chinese history, and the concept of filial piety (*xiao* 孝) was highly valued. In late imperial China, filial piety became a subtle political tool to promote public obedience. Vernacular literature was often used to demonstrate such sensibilities and had a function of cultivation. However, the presentation of filial piety in classical vernacular narratives has been neglected in current scholarship. This paper focuses on how intellectuals viewed filial piety by examining excerpts from “Three Devoted Brothers Win Honour by Yielding Family Property to One Another” (*San xiaolian rangchan li gaoming* 三孝廉讓產立高明) collected in *Stories to Awaken the World (Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恆言) compiled by Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574–1646). In addition to contrasting the Han dynasty with the late Ming era, I argue that this narrative reveals Feng Menglong's sensibilities of filial piety, which can be demonstrated through reverence and fraternal duties.

PRAPANTAMIT, Wuttipong (Kasetsart University)

*When children’s books and national security agendas collide: The role of children’s books on Covid-19 prevention in promoting national security in China*

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese formal education with the hidden curriculum could not properly continue its roles in fostering students to be ‘socialist successors’ due to school closures. Meanwhile, many children’s books on COVID-19 prevention had been published as informal learning resources for children to learn at home, implicitly conveying some similar ideas as presented in the mentioned subjects.

This study aims to examine how the Chinese children’s books on COVID-19 prevention help the government and Chinese Communist Party promote national security when formal education was disrupted. Fairclough’s concept of Critical Discourse Analysis was employed to analyse the twenty children’s books on COVID-19 prevention published in China between 2020-2022. The findings show that several textual elements collectively inculcate a sense of obedience to the national regulations in the readers. The fact that Wuhan, China is the pandemic’s origin point, as globally understood, was not mentioned in the books as globally understood. Furthermore, the book’s production and distribution had been carried out by government agencies to ensure their consumption across the country, where all family members could be perceived as implied readers in children’s reading activity at home. Finally, the books seem to be a result of the government’s intention to control national orderliness affected by the Zero-COVID policy and the people’s perception of the pandemic, thus leading to national security. The study argues that to understand China’s nationalist agendas in education, we should not focus only on textbooks in schooling systems but also on children’s books in wider society.

QIU, Chufan (University of Glasgow)

*Identity reconstruction of Chinese international students in higher education*

The identity reconstruction of Chinese international students is an important area of study because it provides insight into the challenges they face when migrating for education. Adapting to new cultural norms, languages, and social expectations can lead to a significant shift in their personal identity. However, literature on this topic tends to focus on a static snapshot of identity reconstruction rather than a dynamic process that takes into account changes over time.

As part of a larger six-month ethnographic study, the present research investigated the identity reconstruction of Chinese international students through one-on-one semi-structured interviews, audio diaries, and informal conversations. The findings suggest that possessed capitals have an impact on academic identity negotiation, and the ability to convert existing capitals to new capitals also affects identity negotiation. The fluid and dynamic nature of identity means that successful language learners at the outset may limit their investment in language learning due to subsequent changes.

Furthermore, the amount of capital a person possesses can vary depending on the context. For example, some second language learners who make limited investments in their studies can successfully connect with local students and establish good friendships in informal settings.

In conclusion, studying the identity reconstruction of Chinese international students provides valuable insight into the challenges they face and the dynamic process of their identity reconstruction over time. It highlights the importance of possessing capitals, converting them to new capitals, and the impact of context on identity reconstruction.

ROBERTSON, Megan Mhairi (The University of Edinburgh)

*Negotiating bridewealth in urban contemporary China*

This paper will analyse the way in which bridewealth 彩礼 (*caili*) is negotiated in contemporary urban China among middle-class and above “new generation” (those born after 1980) (Li, 2020) Han Chinese. Bridewealth, typically recognised as a transfer of assets from the groom’s family to the bride’s family around the time of marriage (Goody, 1973: 1-2), is still commonplace in China today and is negotiated as part of a wider set of exchanges that includes the dowry and marital gifts (Yan, 2009: 158; Liang, 2021). In recent years, the bridewealth practice has taken on new forms as China has experienced significant political, social and cultural change and notable transformations to notions of family and self (Santos and Harrell, 2017: 21). Today, in urban areas, bridewealth tends to be given directly to the new conjugal family as an endowment rather than going directly to the bride’s family (Zhang, 2023; Yan, 1996; Li and Li, 2020). The average value of bridewealth in China has also increased notably in recent decades (Jiang and Sánchez-Barricarte, 2012), reportedly averaging RMB 69,000 (~GBP 8,200) in 2020, with the “standard value” in some regions as high as RMB 380,000 (~GBP 45,200) (Chong and Chang, 2023). This raises the key question of: why has bridewealth taken on its current form? Based on online and in-person ethnographic research conducted between January and June 2023, this paper reflects on the experiences of ten couples living and working in Beijing and Shanghai to contribute empirical knowledge on how bridewealth is negotiated, what is motivating individual actors to perpetuate the practice in this way and what meaning they attach to this practice. The findings will add to our understanding of marriage values and intergenerational relationship dynamics in the urban Chinese family.

ROD, Zdeněk (University of West Bohemia)

*Chinese debt trap diplomacy: reality or myth?*

Debt-trap diplomacy (DTD) is seen as a relatively new Chinese policy tool connected to BRI. DTD builds on the approach that China intentionally excessively lends money to low-income indebted states that cannot later repay Chinese debt. The borrowing state thus relinquishes some of its strategic assets to decrease its debt burden towards China (debt-for-equity swap). DTD debate has been encompassed by particular criticism questioning the existence of such a strategy as DTD. Scholars questioning DTD existence suggest DTD is far more complicated than it is usually portrayed, meaning DTD should not be automatically taken as a predatory technique China strategically pursues. This study seeks to elucidate whether China uses DTD as an elaborated strategic tool or if it is a solely constructed narrative that does not have any empirical substantiation. Six countries – Sri Lanka, Maldives, Malaysia, Laos, Kenya, and Djibouti – were analysed.

RUAN, Ji (Guizhou Minzu University), ALEKE, Jane Nchekwube (Guizhou Minzu University), RUAN, Shizhan (University of Kent)

*Cross-Class Guanxi and Reproduction of Social Strata: Case Studies of Middle class and Migrant Worker Parents Using Guanxi for their Children’s School Admission in China*

"Tie strength" has been extensively discussed in social network analysis and also used to analyze Chinese *guanxi* (personal connections). Against the background of social stratification in China, cross-class *guanxi* however has received little attention.This study delves into understanding how a person from a lower class practice *guanxi* with people in middle class and how this is related to social stratification in China. Based on two case studies of school admission in a Chinese cities, this paper finds that the key to using cross-class *guanxi* (from lower class to higher class) to obtain resources are "obligation" and "expectation of return” other than tie strength.People of the same social class are easier to use *guanxi* to exert influence than cross-class *guanxi* due to different level of "expectations of return ". Both classes use indirect ties, and the middle class use "introduction type" more often while migrant workers usually use "entrusted" ties. Introduction type is a lot more effective than entrusted type since the former exert the influence by several people at the same time. Migrant workers linking social capital is difficult to develop in a *renqing* society where the rule of return or *bao* is highly advocated and separation of superior and inferior are highly emphasized. Social stratification highly influence the use of *guanxi* in China, while *guanxi* facilitates reproduction of social strata,making Chinese social stratification wider.

SAHAKYAN, Mher (University of Hongkong)

*The US Sanctions on China’s and Russia’s Advanced Technology Sectors: Decoupling and Coupling*

This study focuses on Sino-Russian high-tech cooperation and examines the impact of the US Sanctions on China's and Russia's advanced technology sectors. It argues that China and Russia try to maintain high-tech cooperation even if Western sanctions are making problems. Chinese technology companies are interested in remaining in the Russian market with its more than 143 million population. Therefore, the US led-sanctions are harmful, but they are not stopping Russo-Chinese coupling in the advanced technology sector. On the contrary, these simultaneous sanctions on China and Russia are providing added impetus to strengthen cooperation in the technology field under the Digital Silk Road framework. Simply put, China has high-tech production, and Russia needs to buy it to develop and keep its technology sector alive. Therefore, in the future Sino-Russian cooperation in the technology sphere will witness hardship but will not stop.

SU, Chang (King’s College London)

*Chinese Tripartite Cooperation in Global Infrastructure Projects*

Purpose: In 2015, the Chinese government proposed tripartite cooperation (第三方市场合作, *Di San Fang Shi Chang He Zuo*) as a new approach to promote economic cooperation between Chinese enterprises and western enterprises in a third, beneficial country. This research aims to provide an overview of Chinese tripartite cooperation projects and explore how China, western countries and beneficiary countries cooperate in economic infrastructure projects.

Methodology: To address the research question, data was collected on 68 tripartite cooperation projects in economic infrastructure, particularly in the transportation and energy sectors. Dummy variables were used to measure the degree of engagement of China, Western countries, and beneficiary countries in the four dimensions (state-owned enterprises, government direct financing, high-level government officer meetings, and policy support), as well as cooperation records between the entities of the bilateral partners (China-Western, Western-Local, China-Local).

Findings: China depends on national capital and investment from state-owned enterprises in tripartite cooperation projects, while Western countries typically rely more on the participation of private sector giants. Beneficiary countries usually provide local policy support to tripartite cooperation activities. Before initiating a project, it is crucial to establish solid bilateral partnerships on past cooperative experiences to promote tripartite cooperation. Through these efforts, participants can achieve convergence in tripartite cooperation by reconciling divergent interests and goals.

SUN, Yantao (University of Leeds)

*Reinventing ‘heroic sons and daughters’: a rising hybrid genre of web romantic fiction and the popularism imagination of self-community relationship in contemporary China*

As a part of a larger project, this paper serves as an overview of a rising hybrid genre of Chinese web fiction that juxtaposes the ‘grand narrative’ of protecting ‘*jiaguo tianxia*家国天下 (family, nation, and all-under-heaven)’ and sentimental romantic love stories set in an alternate, quasi-Confucian feudal society. Acknowledged for flying the flag of *jiaguo tianxia*, the hybrid genre invokes the Chinese traditional story mode of chivalry scholar-beauty fiction (also known as *ernv yingxiong* style *‘*儿女英雄’ heroic sons and daughters) that it updates with an infusion of contemporary understanding of love, self, and community. While the traditional *ernv yingxiong* style highlights the significance of social collectivism, current works render a major paradigm shift on the primary focus from public-related concerns to private feelings and immanence.

Theoretically informed by Haiyan Lee (*Revolution of the Heart*), I consider love and its discourse as the articulatory practice (Lee, 2007) redefining the social order and forms of self, which appear as the slogan for privateness on the one hand, and the rhetoric of public-related concerns on the other. By providing salient comparisons between traditional and current works in terms of characterization, settings, love relationships, plot arc, and motivations, this paper sheds light on how contemporary works reinvent conventional style with the attempt that ‘reconstruct the self as an individual in a postrevolutionary society (Kong, 2005, p.104)’.

With its immediacy to lived experiences, Chinese web fiction has become a rising popularism aesthetic and a major staging ground in cyberspace for both authors and readers to perform their imagination and reflect on the self, emotions, and self-community relationship. I highlight the grassroots imagination of self-community relationship rendered in Chinese web romances, rather than the intellectual one as previous research focused.

TIAN, Mengyuan (University of Cambridge)

*A local official and the reconstruction of the Huangdi Ancestral Hall: Ancestor worship, legitimacy and officialdom in 1980s China*

This study addresses the main research question of how a grassroots official encouraged, engaged with and empowered the local government to support the reconstruction of a county-level Ancestral Hall of Yellow Emperor, or Huangdi, a legendary collective ancestor of Chinse people, in 1980s mainland China. This ethnographic research illustrates the role of a local official, Zhao (1930–2018), and his intricate relationship with local believers and the government in relation to the revival of Huangdi ancestor worship in Xinzheng, Henan Province. This study highlights the strategies adopted when he reframed and legitimised this popular religion as well as the roles he played in this process, both inside and outside of the local religious community and political institution. Zhao was motivated by his responsibilities to pay homage to the collective ancestor as a Huangdi offspring and to honour his hometown, and his government position and influential guanxi network laid a foundation for his leadership and success during the reconstruction. The shared recognition of identities as Huangdi offspring and interpersonal relationships between local people enabled him to build, maintain and extend his networks inside and outside of officialdom, local society, and the community of religious practitioners. During the reconstruction, two accomplishments has been achieved: the revival of Huangdi worship in the local context and the institutionalisation of this belief via higher-level officials’inspections, official conferences and publications. Based on this case study, this research aims to further reveal the recreation of local pantheons, ritual practices, and popular religions in 1980s mainland China.

TSUI, Wai (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

*The Life of “Yugong” 寓公 (Duke in Exile) in Traditional Chinese Poetry of early 20th Century*

The Qing loyalists are in many ways unique to their traditional counterparts, owing to the complexity of their modern background. After the 1911 Revolution, many have chosen to stay as loyalists, but with different agenda and life styles. Among many factors, “place” can be used to categorize them. Those who are more involved in politics tend to stay nearer to Beijing, whereas further away from the capital, loyalists are more concerned with cultural changes. A third group of loyalists, farthest from the centre, who stay in Hong Kong and Macao sometimes call themselves “yugong” (duke in exile). The colonial nature of Hong Kong and Macao has left them feeling awkward. On the one hand, they stay in the land of Chinese; on the other hand, the colonies are very different from the China they identified with. Wang Zhaoyong 汪兆鏞is a typical example of this group.

During Wang’s travels in Macao and Hong Kong, he has written extensively in traditional *shi* and *ci* poetry, making himself an influential poet in Canton. The study explores Wang’s life and writings, especially poems written in Macao, including *Poems of Yugong in Macao, Miscellaneous Poems of Macao* and his lyric poetry. In these works, he portrays himself with multiple identities: loyalist, recluse, historian and literati. It is hoped that the case of Wang can shed light on how traditional poetry plays an important role in the life of loyalists in colonial Hong Kong and Macao and their (re)construction of a new literary tradition.

WAN, Hui (China Agricultural University, Guangzhou), ZHANG, Ji (China Agricultural University, Guangzhou)

*Content analysis of disabled toilet policy and its actual usage in Guangzhou*

In 2015, China the whole country opened the "Toilets Revolution" prelude.From 2015 to 2017, a total of More than 70,000 toilets have been newly rebuilt.From 2018 to 2020, the country plans to build,to reconstruct of expand of 64,000 tourist toilets. However, only quantitative changes alone cannot be called "revolutions", "revolutions" should be a qualitative change—not only the partial facility change from squatting to sitting,but also from concept to design fundamental changes and from policy on paper to social development and people's needs.

In "Toilets Revolution", disabled toilets seem to be under-appreciated. The police makers are obviously lack of understanding of users’ needs. We will focus on China’s governance of the Toilets Revolution,including China’s central government and its below-national level ministries.

we decide to use public information and policies posted on governmental and administrative websites as empirical data. The public information found on these sites generally speaks of governmental actions,including Governments’ statements, such as documents, policies, regulations, notices, reports, guidance, etc. What’s more, responses to both official administrations and the public, public information, for instance, new articles, press conferences, government department meetings, interviews, policy interpretations are also in our research horizon.

On the other hand,we will explore the toileting experiences of disabled people in Guangzhou where is at the forefront of China's economic development We will conduct field surveys and draw toilet maps to understand the actual use of disabled toilets and try to find the reasons for the gap between policy and reality.

WANG, Canglong *(*University of Hull)

*Individual Self, Sage Discourse, and Parental Authority: Why Do Confucian Students Reject Further Confucian Studies as Their Educational Future?*

Throughout the twenty-first century, Confucian education has rapidly expanded among the grassroots in China. This study focuses on the most influential style of Confucian education, dujing (classics reading) education, and on a very understudied group, the young students, in the Confucian education system. Using data collected at a Confucian school, this study aims to elucidate dujing students’ genuine thoughts and feelings toward their plans for future education. The findings suggest that dujing students exhibit an individualistic outlook, which is characterized by their personal aspirations, self-determination, independence, and self-pursuit, as well as a reluctance to pursue further Confucian studies. Their self-identity is further strengthened by resistance to the authoritarian discourse circulating in the domain of dujing education and by a shifting relationship with imposed parental expectations. This study argues that the development of Confucian individualism in students’ dujing experience must be understood within the broader social contexts shaping Chinese individualisms and subjectivities.

WANG, Dylan K (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London)

*Depicting Chinese Murders: Robert van Gulik’s Judge Dee Mysteries as Illustrated by Himself*

Robert van Gulik (1910-1967), or Gao Luopei 高羅佩, is remembered today in academic circles chiefly as an erudite (and somewhat quirky) pioneer in Sinology. To the general reader, he is best known for the sequence of detective stories starring the Tang dynasty scholar-official Di Renjie 狄仁傑 (630-700) or ‘Judge Dee’.

Van Gulik himself, in fact, much cherished his fiction-writing, referring to it as ‘an indispensable third facet’ of his life’s work, in addition to his illustrious career in diplomacy and his scholarly work. These three facets constantly interacted with, and cross-fertilised, each other: his diplomatic career allowed prolonged sojourns in the ‘Orient’ where he cultivated all the passions of a traditional Chinese scholar-official; these pursuits became the subjects of his many scholarly studies; his research in turn provided the raw material for his stories, making them ‘authentically’ Chinese.

An outstanding feature of the Judge Dee series is the profuse illustrations drawn by the author himself, 208 in total, including 10 maps, 6 floor plans, as well as 27 depictions of cultural artifacts. This paper attempts to study these plates in terms of their possible sources, their ‘authenticity’, and their representation of eroticised female forms. The purpose is to illuminate possible ways works of art and images participate as powerful mediators in the creation and global circulation of literature. This study also seeks to furnish a fascinating but largely neglected aspect of the close interaction and cross-fertilising between the three facets of van Gulik’s career.

WANG, Fengqiang (University of Bristol)

*‘As long as my child is happy’: The experience of Chinese adult children coming out to their parents in mainland China*

This paper is part of my ongoing PhD research on intergenerational relationships of Chinese gay/lesbian adult children and their supportive parents in mainland China. Using qualitative online interviews with both parents and their adult children together, this paper looks at the parent-adult child relationships and family dynamics after those adults coming out to their parents.

Coming out to others has been considered as a crucial life event that contributes to gay and lesbian individuals’ sexual identity formation. It is challenging to disclose sexual identity/ orientation to others, especially to parents in Chinese societies. Family rejections have been found to affect gay and lesbian people’s well-being. Those who feel pressure from parents and who have received family rejections experience a range of difficulties, such as depression, suicidal ideations/attempts, domestic violence from parents, and conversion therapy etc.

However, an increasing number of researchers have recently started to look at parents’ acceptance and support to their gay/lesbian adult children. Family support to gay and lesbian children can improve children’s mental status and family cohesion. However, the existing research on kinship and parents’ support has concentrated on Western contexts. Inadequate is known about Chinese parents’ support to their gay/lesbian children, and how both parties maintain their family ties. Being parents of gay and lesbian children in an active and ongoing journey through which parents need to construct a new identity. However, this have not been explored in Chinese families. This paper is an attempt to respond to these research gaps.

WANG, Hsiao-Wen (National Defense University)

*The Analysis of the Historical Poetry on the Burning of the Old Summer Palace by the Anglo-French Forces*

This research delves into the burning of the Old Summer Palace, Yuanmingyuan, by the Anglo-French forces—a shameful event in Chinese imperial history. Despite its well-known impact on the capital, the incident and subsequent accountability were deliberately omitted from historical records. This study examines how the event was documented in historical poetry and evaluates diverse perspectives on the war to construct a nuanced interpretation.

The paper focuses on two key aspects. Firstly, it analyzes the Historical Poetry surrounding the burning of the Old Summer Palace, providing insights into the incident's historical writings during the Gengshen Year. Secondly, it explores the mourning perspectives of different poets and their identities, considering the impact on interpretations—ranging from homogeneity to heterogeneity.

By scrutinizing the Historical Poetry and embracing multiple perspectives, this study aims to reconstruct a comprehensive understanding of this significant event. Through reevaluation, it seeks to deepen knowledge of this chapter in Chinese history and foster a nuanced appreciation of its complexities. Ultimately, this research contributes to a more diverse and enriched interpretation of the burning of the Old Summer Palace and its implications.

WANG, Michael (University College London)

*The identity impossible to reconcile—homosexuality among Turkic minorities in China*

Chinese Turkic minorities are generally characterized by their collective Muslim identity (although the strength of religiosity varies across ethnic groups and individuals) and their particular ethnic identities, such as Uyghur, Kazakh, etc. However, for the Chinese Turkic homosexuals, the religious and ethnic identities are in direct confrontation with their homosexuality as neither the social interpretation of Islam nor the ethnic culture on sexuality and masculinity acknowledges the existence of homosexuality. Despite having a homophobic inclination, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) provides Turkic homosexuals with a different identity narrative, “a modernized Chinese nation,” that contrasts with the normative identity developed from “unmodern”, “conservative”, and “backward” Turkic Muslim culture and society.

Therefore, Turkic homosexuals are left with two choices: either rejecting the CCP’s modernization narrative (Sinicization) and embracing the ethnic identity, which means that they have to reconcile homosexuality with Muslim identity granted by the ethnic identity, or accepting CCP’s Sinicization, meaning that they have to reconcile the ethnic identity and the normative Chinese identity constructed by CCP. This paper examines the two different processes of reconciliation and argues that in Chinese Turkic society, being an ethnically conscious homosexual is an unstable status that leads to either the return to the normative ethnic identity that denies homosexuality or Sinicization that inevitably removes certain elements of the ethnic identity. Nevertheless, due to CCP’s homophobic inclination, the Sinicized homosexual identity is still relatively unstable, which results in Turkic homosexuals’ pursuit of a more stable identity narrative that could accommodate ethnic identity and homosexuality elsewhere.

WANG, Weijing (Bielefeld University)

*Hyper-commodification, Brand Packaging and Platformization of Rural China: Take TikTok’s Prevalence in the Countryside as an Example*

This paper focuses on how the appearance of the use value of China’s countryside is influenced by hyper-commodification and packaging in platformization. The data was collected on account of one-year ethnography conducted in Chinese rural areas from 2021 to 2022 and documents analysis. Drawing on Marx’s definition of commodity fetishism, Wolfgang Haug concludes that the commodities have a “double reality”—“use value” and “the appearance of use value”, while the appearance of use value is essentially “detached” from the object itself. By using these concepts as the key elements, this paper argues that the platformization of the countryside has resulted in changes of the appearance of the use value of rural commodities, which are increasingly separated from the objects themselves owing to diverse packaging methods on platforms. Regarding this, three arguments are: 1) the state discourse is packaged through the platform to produce a new ideology of developing the countryside; 2) the hyper-commodification formed by the brand packaging on platforms has brought about the reshaping of appearance of use value for Chinese countryside; 3) the popularization of platforms in the countryside is the expansion process of platform capitalism to rural areas, which is accomplished by the consumerism propaganda. The contribution of this paper will be: firstly, to provide a case for the expansion of Chinese platform capitalism; secondly, to propose hyper-commodification mechanisms on platforms.

XIAO, Lan (University of Oxford)

*Remaking and Unmaking the Home in Shanghai during the Pandemic*

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way people experience and feel about their homes and made the home increasingly important. Home became a place where everything in life was happening: work, social life, and even survival. During the lockdowns, people were physically stuck in their homes and lost access to the social sphere almost entirely. Did the pandemic make people want to change their living environments or even move to new places? Did it aggravate the way people feel about home — how happy or secure can one feel in the home when it became impossible to leave?

Based on fieldwork in Shanghai from November 2019 to May 2021 and remote follow-up in 2022, this paper examines and compares the two lockdown periods in Shanghai in 2020 and 2022 to discuss issues of privacy, security, and collectivism. During lockdowns, homes were managed and overseen by state-driven neighbourhood committees. In 2020, the insecurity of being ‘watched’ by neighbours and the committees was underwhelmed by the collective sense of security constituted by this self-monitoring system. However, this perception was changed in the stricter lockdown in 2022. Under extreme circumstances, the privacy of home appeared to be completely undermined, leading to the increasing sense of insecurity of living in one’s own home when it could potentially be forced in. At the same time, new social relations among households emerged to help navigate people through the crisis. By comparing the two lockdowns, this paper reconsiders what home is and its relation to the State.

XIE, Kailing (University of Birmingham ), ZHOU, Yunyun (University of Oslo)

*Tokophobia as Feminist Resistance? Female Netizens’ Reproductive Experiences and Discourses in China’s Cyberspace*

One unexpected consequence of China’s One Child Policy is a sharp increase of the number of well-educated women in its reform era. While globally women's educational attainment is negatively correlated to fertility rate, the social norm of heteronormative marriage and child-rearing remains predominant way of life. Concerned about the ‘population crisis’ with its dropping birth rate and fast aging population, the Chinese state has turned to pro-natalist policy that encourage married couples to have more children since 2021, despite the lack of supportive maternity and child-care policies. China’s essentialist gender discourse natrualises motherhood that has led to the so-called ‘widow-style childrearing’, with little input from the paternal side. How do young women react to such reproductive dilemma, with both fear for missing out and the anxiety of being overwhelmed? How do women gain knowledge, exchange ideas about their reproductive choices and experiences? In what way cyberspace communities can provide alternative spaces for these somehow stigmatised discussions? To investigate these issues, we have compiled a dataset that consists of 3153 posts under the topic ‘What does reproduction mean to women?’ from Douban, a popular forum among China’s young female urbanites from March 2020 to June 2022. As an ongoing project, we are currently coding and analysing the dataset with the aim to understand the general themes, topics, values emerged from these discussions. In this talk, we will share our preliminary findings from the ongoing data analysis, but importantly the significance of such alternative public space online for China’s gender dynamics and feminist movements.

XIE, Zihui (University of Glasgow)

*The Politics of China’s Pension Reform in Government and Public Institutions*

Pension reforms relating to reducing benefits of civil servants and staff of public institutions were finally launched in China from 2014. This marked the end of existing non-contributory system and a new era of a contributory pension insurance system. While there is abundant literature exploring how pension benefits have been retrenched in democratic political systems, little is known about why and how an authoritarian state such as China proceeds pension reforms against strong obstacles. Thus, my research aims to uncover the type of change occurred to China’s pension system in government and public institutions (GPI), the reason why this system could be changed despite strong obstacles, and the causal mechanisms that underpinned the process. Accordingly, my research uses process tracing to make causal inference on the GPI pension reform case. The empirical basis of my research is the manual coding over 70 policy documents and official news reports, and in-depth interviews with pension experts in China. The initial findings demonstrate that strong political will and key policy entrepreneurs appear to be key drivers of the reform in the face of strong obstacles. Moreover, they need to draw upon a variety of strategies to ensure that reforms are proceeded and implemented. These strategies are division (dividing groups and thus reducing the mobilising power of reforming population), obfuscation (hiding the intended reform outcome), compensation (compensating the most affected group) and delay (postponing the unsettled issues). My research will make theoretical contributions to the retrenchment literature by informing why and how an authoritarian state such as China promotes pension reforms against strong obstacles.

XU, Pengfei (University of Manchester)

*Credit in Chinese political rationality through time*

In the 2014, the Chinese government officially promulgated the social credit system (SCS), which aims at encouraging sincerity in the Chinese society. Through the document, the Chinese government wants to guide individual behaviour by quantifying value and virtue. This paper will investigate how Chinese rulers’ writing and thinking about credit have developed over years. By tracing its emergence and development, my analysis illuminates that credit has developed along three normative dimensions: a motive to produce homo economicus, an essential element for governing China and a tool for political obedience in the hands of the CCP. This paper demonstrate how credit is rooted in discourses and official practices that evolved through history. In the first part, the paper focuses on how certain credit problems were described and shaped in the official material of Chinese government. It then applies genealogy in the second section to explore historical antecedents of morality discourses in the history of Chinese governance. By putting the moral practices into Chinese history, this paper points out that the requirement of civic morality in SCS fits the historical tradition of Chinese rulers. In the last part, by considering contemporary sociopolitical context, it demonstrates that the credit scope of SCS is being extended, becoming a tool to increase the obedience of Chinese citizens. These three dimensions are closely connected with what counts as credit within the social credit system. Among these three dimensions, this paper historicises and problematises the ways credit is constructed.

YANG, Gong (University of Macau)

*Language teachers’ identity in teaching intercultural communicative competence*

This paper reports on our inquiry into how language teachers’ identities relate to their efforts to teach intercultural communicative competence. In the study, we collected data through in-depth interviews with and observations of 16 Chinese language teachers in Hong Kong’s international schools. The analysis revealed that the participants simultaneously embraced multiple professional and sociocultural identities related to intercultural communicative competence teaching. Specifically, the professional identities included a *Chinese language teacher* identity and a *school staff member* identity, while the sociocultural identity comprised a *Chinese culture bearer* identity, a *multicultural* identity, a *cultural transmitter* identity, a *culture learner* identity, and a *cultural bridge* identity. These identities were found to compete with or reinforce each other in mediating the participants’ efforts in relation to teaching intercultural communicative competence; different identities were often associated with different understandings of and approaches to teaching intercultural communicative competence. The findings suggest that language teacher educators need to recognize teacher identities as an important pedagogical resource when preparing language teachers for teaching in cross-cultural contexts.

YANG, Hao (Lancaster University)

*A Happy Excursion Against the China's Digital Leviathan*

Every facet of our life has been digitalised in this time called 'the Big Data era'. In an accumulative manner, the network of information technologies has grown into a ‘digital Leviathan’ monopolising and manipulating the individual’s way of thinking, sensing and being. Particularly in China, By combining the state apparatus with big data, China is developing a "digital leviathan with Chinese characteristics". In this research, I use the Chinese Taoist allegory ‘the happy excursion’ to compose a set of art practices as a method to explore the digital Leviathan and ways of coping with it. Theoretically, it draws on the critical traditions of media and mass culture studies, the phenomenological approach to technology and body, as well as the Chinese Taoist philosophy. Practically, the project will mainly be presented as a performative video that records my traveling across China without any information technology, accompanied by a series of written works and multi-media responses towards relevant social events. The most tangible interface of the digital Leviathan in our daily life is smartphones, which gradually monopolise the way we connect with the world. In this light, I started to think, what if I try to get rid of the smartphone, refuse all digital information and contact the external world using no digital technology? Will such a happy excursion built on this 'ignorance', 'primitivity' and the combination of the thoughts of deconstructivism and Taoism eventually be the key to retrieve individual experience, perception and even humanity at large?

YANG, Shaoyu (University of Warwick)

*Memory Lost and Revived: Representations of the Nanjing Massacre in the Novels of Chinese American Writers and their Self-Translation*

The Nanjing Massacre, a collective tragedy in modern Chinese history, has been facing memory loss since the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War. To combat amnesia, an amount of literary writing of this historical suffering, especially the works by Chinese American writers, increasingly emerged and was translated from and into Chinese. This study focuses on the intersection of memory formation and self-translation, specifically examining how Chinese American writers use their bilingual ability, historical and cultural resources, and narrative strategies to construct a transcultural memory of the Nanjing Massacre through their literary creation and self-translation in Anglophone and Sinophone worlds. By conducting a comparative textual analysis of Shouhua Qi’s *When the Purple Mountain Burns* (2005), Hong Zheng’s *Nanjing Never Cries* (2016), and the Chinese translations of these two novels completed by the authors themselves, this paper investigates the ways of reproducing the atrocity and suffering in the Nanjing Massacre in the original and translated texts, the reasons why different methods are adopted to narrate the story of the Massacre in English and Chinese, and the influences of self-translation on the loss and revival of the memory of this traumatic event. It is argued that the author’s identity as well as literary and language competence affect the representation of national trauma in different cultural contexts. More individual memories and internal voices can be found in the translation. The memory revived in their self-translation in mother tongue also becomes a way for immigrant writers to psychologically return to their mother land.

YI, Duanyi (University of Glasgow)

*The Evolution of the Chinese Communist Party’s Definition of the Victory in Wars*

Since the 18th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 2012, President Xi Jinping has emphasized the importance of strengthening China’s military capabilities, including “(army) could fight, could win”, “Strengthening the army is to strengthen the nation”, “Joint Operation”, “aiming to win the information-based war”. A concept called “Victory Mechanism”, known in Chinese as Zhi Sheng Ji Li (制胜机理) has also emerged in Xi’s speeches on military strength, demonstrating a commitment to comprehensively enhancing China’s military capabilities. Furthermore, Xi is transforming his thought into the substantial expanding on the number of nuclear arsenal since 2021, raising questions about China’s military ambitions. What is China’s purpose of strengthening military capabilities in Xi’s era? Will China pursue a path to be a nuclear superpower, or will it maintain the defensive nuclear policy?

This essay will answer these questions by reviewing the evolution of the definition of the victory in wars from Mao Zedong's era to Xi Jinping's era. The review is to identify the influence of previous CCP generations’ ideas on victory and determine whether defensive military policies remain dominant under Xi. This essay will also interpret the differences in the definition of victory in Xi’s era compared to those of previous generations, seeking to understand the implications of these differences for China’s military buildup. The main argument is: China’s military policy is transforming from defensive to more offensive and the definition of victory in Xi’s era is to achieve the hegemony and construct the new international structure.

YU, Verna (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London)

*Unfulfilled Dreams: China’s “Liberal” Communist Party Intellectuals’ Struggle for Democracy from the 1930s to the 2000s*

The focus of this paper is the intellectual transformation of a dozen of Chinese Communist party elders known as “democrats within the party” (黨內民主派) who struggled in a dynamic tension throughout their lives between their longing for democracy and the Communist utopia, liberal and Marxist-Leninist values, as well as humanity (人性) and party spirit (黨性).

In the 1930s and 1940s, the subjects of this study got involved with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), attracted by its promises of freedom, democracy and equality and also driven by their desire to “save the nation” amid the War of Resistance against Japan and the civil wars between the ruling Nationalist Party (KMT) and the CCP. In their bid to build a communist utopia, they were shocked to find that their twin goals of democracy and Communism were often in conflict. Under Mao Zedong’s regime, they painfully struggled between their longing for democracy and their commitment to the Communist revolution. In the post Mao era, they went through a complex process of “awakening” and openly criticised the party they helped build and called for democratic reforms. They however remained disillusioned till the end of their lives.

I demonstrated how the delicate equilibrium in the dynamic tension between their pursuit of democracy and their commitment to the Communist revolution was at first in harmony in the pre-1949 era and how it went awry in the Mao era. Having adopted the Marxist historical view, they suppressed their liberal roots and became convinced that totalitarianism was a necessary evil on the path to the Communist utopia. I argue that, although they were victims in rounds of political persecutions, their compliance and commitment to the party helped shore up the legitimacy of the regime, particularly in the People’s Republic’s early years.

YIN, Xinyi (King’s College London)

*Exploring Lying-Flat: Unveiling Youth Activism and Anti-Capitalist Resistance*

Lying-Flat/躺平" is a buzzword that emerged in 2021, describing the desire for a minimal labour lifestyle and basic life satisfaction, challenging traditional notions of work in China. Evolving from a sociological discourse to a political one, Lying-Flat has various implications, including its relevance to social activism, such as the A4 movement. This paper explores the challenges posed by Lying-Flat to global capitalism and examines its potential as an emergent anti-capitalist movement. The analytical framework is based on "Global China as Method (Franceschini and Loubere, 2022)".

The paper is organized into three thematic sections that scrutinize distinct facets of Lying-Flat and its interconnections with capitalist development:

1. Unravelling the Anti-Capitalism Essence of Lying-Flat and Deconstructing the Neoliberal Paradigm: This section explores the theoretical underpinnings and motivations behind Lying-Flat as a potent form of resistance and critique against prevailing capitalist norms. It critically examines how the movement challenges the dominance of the neoliberal paradigm and its implications for capitalist development.

2. Reconceptualizing Labor and Productivity: Focusing on Lying-Flat, this section investigates its transformative impact on traditional notions of work and its reverberations within capitalist production dynamics. It highlights the experiences of marginalized individuals, such as urban young labourers with rural hukou, as examples of the changing landscape of labour within the Lying-Flat movement.

3. Global Implications and Interconnections: This section explores the broader ramifications of the Lying-Flat movement beyond specific geographic contexts. It assesses its potential linkages with global anti-capitalism movements and evaluates its role in fostering alternative trajectories for global capitalist development.

YUAN, Yashi (University College London)

*From Victimhood to Victory: The Construction of Pre-PRC National History in High School Textbooks Pre and Post Textbook Reform*

China's official narrative of "national humiliation" has been a crucial element in history textbooks, theorised as a "narrative template," referring to underlying structures in national memory extended from the past to the present. Since Xi Jinping's presidency in 2012, China's history textbook has undergone significant changes due to a nationwide textbook revision along with Xi's ideological movement attempting to reconstruct a powerful Sino-centric discourse. This study draws upon narrative theories and systemic functional linguistics (SFL) to examine the extent to which the China Communist Party (CCP) is still promoting the narrative of "national humiliation" by analysing the holistic narrative structures and appraisal discourses embedded in two high school history textbooks published in 2007 and 2019. The study finds that though "national humiliation" is a theme present in both textbooks, in the 2019 version, this theme is not salient in its post-1919 narrative. The 2019 textbook also presents a more positive judgment on the competence and resolution of the CCP compared to its counterparts in the 2019 version and CCP in the 2007 version, revealing a new pattern of different social groups' failed attempts to save China prior to CCP, portraying CCP as the "superior hero" that leads China's revolution to a bright future since its birth in 1919. The findings suggest a shift in the narrative template from a humiliating past of victimhood to a victorious past of "fighting for rejuvenation", raising questions about the extent to which Xi's ideology still promotes the old "victim narrative" to maintain CCP's legitimacy.

ŽELEZNÝ, Jan (University of West Bohemia in Pilsen), MICHLMAYR, Timna (University of Vienna)

*Chase for the Red Stars: China-Russia Synergy in Outer Space and Its Impact on Global Power Competition in the 21st Century*

Space has become a new domain of great power competition rather than a common heritage of mankind. After the end of the bipolar confrontation, Washington has emerged as an uncontested unipolar power, however, its dominance is being challenged by China. Outer space is seen as strategically important for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and portrayed as an indispensable part of Beijing’s vision of mankind as a global community of shared destiny. It provides strategic assurance for social development and the preservation of core interests. To strengthen its position and leverage synergies, Beijing has developed cooperation with Moscow. Russia still maintains a robust spectrum of Soviet-era capabilities and know-how, remains a global leader in space affairs, and shares efforts to lessen US influence and transform the international order into a multipolar one. The connection of the BeiDou and Glonass navigation systems (2018), the building of the space-based missile warning capabilities, joint motions to limit space-militarization, or the ambitious plans (2021) to launch the International Lunar Research Station (Chang’e + Luna program) demonstrate the joint results. As part of the partnership ‘without limits’, they constitute a potential game-changer in the dynamics of power competition in outer space. Our paper will, therefore, map the development of the Sino-Russian space cooperation, address its strong and weak points, present its most significant highlights, and describe its impact on the security dilemma with the risks of a relentless race between great powers turning space into a war-fighting domain.

ZHANG, Amanda (University of St Andrews)

*Reforming Mother-in-Laws: Interpreting, Implementing and Campaigning the 1950 Marriage Law in Shijiazhuang, 1953.*

In 1953 officials from the Shijiazhuang Municipal Women’s Federation 石家庄市妇联hosted a large number of “Mother-in-Law meetings (*popo hui* 婆婆会),” conducted family visits that mediated conflicts between Mother and Daughters-in-Laws, and used “model Mother and Daughter-in-Laws (*mofan poxi*模范婆媳)” to propagate and implement the 1950 Marriage Law. Existing scholarship on the 1950 Marriage Law and the subsequent 1953 Marriage Law campaign predominantly puts gender relations between men and women at the core of their analysis. This paper builds on and counterbalances existing approaches by focusing instead on same-sex, mother and daughter-in-law relationships in its investigation on the impact of Marriage Law in Shijiazhuang 石家庄, a regional railway hub and an industrial city in Hebei 河北. Using internal Shijiazhuang Women’s Federation 石家庄市妇联 sources from the Shijiazhuang Municipal Archives 石家庄市档案馆, which includes extensive work reports, plans, and summaries, this paper shows that Mother-in-Laws were a significant target and object of reform in Shijiazhuang. This paper explores the content and context of Shijiazhuang Women’s Federation activities, why Mother-in-Laws were considered to be an important part of the campaign, and how officials in Shijiazhuang interpreted, propagated and implemented the 1950 Marriage Law. It contributes to existing work on local Shijiazhuang history, and addresses issues related to gender and state-family relations during the early People’s Republic of China.

ZHANG, Jin (University College London)

*Unpacking Chinese Heritage Tradition: A Multi-Dimensional Approach*

The focus of this paper is on the definition of cultural heritage in ancient Han Chinese society. Through an analysis of ancient discourse on historical sites and relics, the author identifies four main dimensions of traditional Chinese views on cultural heritage: Wen (文, textile or text), Wu (物, material object), Gu (古, ancient or antiquity), and Ji (跡, relics or traces). (1) Wen, as the carrier of "Dao" (道, the Way) and the embodiment of "De" (德, virtue), is central to what constitutes heritage. (2) While the material “Wu” is important, it is secondary to the indispensability of Wen. (3) Gu incorporates not only a temporal, but also an aesthetic perspective into the notion of heritage. (4) Ji represents the intersection between the ancient and the present, connecting relics with human beings.

This holistic and synthetic understanding of heritage challenges the widely accepted tangible/intangible heritage dichotomy in modern heritage studies. Instead, it proposes that heritage value does not solely derive from physical relics or textual manifestations, but rather from the interaction between text, materiality, temporality, and human experience. This interaction creates a field or context from which heritage value arises, and it is within this context that heritage must be understood. The author believes that in-depth exploration and understanding of the four dimensions and their interconnections would provide valuable insights for contemporary heritage representation, conservation, and education.

ZHANG, Ning. (University of Oxford)

*Fighting in a Utopia? Chinese Volunteers and Political Paranoia of the Burmese Communist Party*

During the 1960s-70s, thousands of Chinese youths voluntarily joined the People’s Army of the Burmese Communist Party (BCP). Many Chinese went to Burma for one important political reason-escaping from the pressure of the Chinese Cultural Revolution and to protect themselves and their families from class-based humiliation and suspicion in China. However, the Burmese battlefield and the BCP were also far from being a utopia for Chinese volunteers. Chinese volunteers had gone through continuous cleansing campaigns in Burma. Based on a wealth of collection of materials such as documents, diaries, work notes, as well as field research, this article makes a pioneering exploration of the political purges that happened to those Chinese and further exposes the tension between the Chinese volunteers and the BCP’s Burmese leaders.

This study examines five significant events that happened in the 1970s, including exposing and criticising ‘Gu Rongcheng, Qi Guihua's counter-revolutionary group’ campaign, the Chinese international Pro-Left Force’s protest against war’, disarming and deporting Chinese Hunan soldiers back to China, ‘Strengthening the proletariats’ party spirit and opposing the sectarian movement’, exposing and criticising ‘Li Rujing, Xu Wenbin, and Du Shiyuan anti-party group’ campaign. This study finds that most of the allegations against the Chinese volunteers proved to be without factual evidence, most accusations and political persecution occurred mainly because the BCP feared that the Chinese volunteers would ‘take over power’, and also the CPB was deeply dissatisfied with the Chinese Communist Party’s efforts to repair relations with the US government and the Burmese central government. Thus, Chinese volunteers turned into a punching bag for the BCP and a victim of the Cold War.

ZHANG, Qingyue (University of Glasgow)

*Reception analysis of China’s identity narrative: Is China an amiable neighbour or bully in Southeast Asia region?*

China's influence in Southeast Asia is significant, as the country considers the region to be central to its global position. While China has used its economic power to deepen its political influence in the region, it has also sought to promote itself as a ‘friendly, peaceful, and constructive’ regional power through its ‘Shared future for mankind’ slogan. However, China's are contentious, particularly considering its Cascade plan on the Lancang River, which has had a direct impact on the livelihoods of lower Mekong basin countries, such as food and energy security caused by water shortage. This article employs a combination of strategic narrative theory and comparison case studies of Laos and Vietnam, both members of the Mekong basin and ASEAN, to analyse China's regional identity narrative. By using thematic analysis examining government documents and state-funded press in these countries, how China emphasizes historical, cultural, and communist ties to forge a collective identity of "shared future for the Mekong region" are identified. Laos is more aligned with China's narrative due to its economic considerations, whereas Vietnam, with its relatively powerful regional position and dependence on the Mekong River, may be more resistant to China's claims. This article argues that using identity strategic narrative to understand the attitudes of regional audiences towards China's regional claims and the possibility to observe international legitimacy.

ZHANG, Yaqi (University of Leeds)

*A Case Study of the Reception of the Translation of Legends of the Condor Heroes Written by Jin Yong*

Legends of the Condor Heroes, one of the Jin Yong’s masterpieces, is a classic work of art that combines elements of Chinese classical literature, philosophy and religion, making it elegant and popular. The story is set during the confrontation between the Southern Song Dynasty and the Jin Dynasty, and depicts the twists and turns of the warriors in the midst of rivalry and dynastic changes. The series of books have been adapted for films, television and comics. In 2018, the first English translation of the first volume, A Hero Born, was published by MacLehose Press in the United Kingdom, which turned out to be a model for international communication of contemporary Chinese literature. The online readers’ reviews of the four volumes in Amazon of UK show different trends in terms of quantities and ratings, with the most notable features being the high acceptance of the translation in general and the diversity of readers’ perspectives. From the comprehensive analysis of the readers’ reviews and the content of the work, this paper explores the factors which have an effect on the choices of readers and focuses on the practical experiences from the English translation of Legends of the Condor Heroes for further global dissemination of contemporary Chinese literature, such as taking native language speakers as the main translators, targeting audience groups accurately, selecting the publishers specifically and so on.

ZHAO, Haiyun (University of Oxford)

*The Co-Evolution of Social Media and the Victims’ Movement in China - a Case Study of Parents of Missing Children*

Existing literature tends to emphasize the unidirectional influence of social media on social movements. This article extends Guobin Yang’s (2003) article on the co-evolution of the Internet and civil society in China, arguing that social media and the victims’ movement in China engage in a dynamic interaction that shapes the trajectory of both entities. The Chinese victims’ movement and social media mutually fuel each other’s growth, despite being subject to other constraints. Social media serves as a conduit for the victims’ movement, offering a platform for victims to harness both market forces and state/police support by directly engaging with a sympathetic public. This intricate interplay sees social media and its associated market forces seek to use this sympathy, and the state strives to bolster its public image. These contentions are grounded in a case study that involves a cohort of parents searching for their missing (abducted or kidnapped) children, who have transitioned into influential figures on the Chinese equivalent of TikTok, Douyin. The study utilizes a combination of qualitative methods, including content analysis of social media posts, in-depth interviews with key activists, and an examination of relevant policy changes.

ZHAO, Xiaohuan (The University of Sydney), LU, Duanfang (The University of Sydney)

*Temples, Temple Theatres and Temple Festivals in China: A Case Study of the Yuci City God Temple*

Chenghuang the City God is a popular tutelary deity in Daoism. In late imperial China, there was hardly a city without a City God temple (Chenghuang miao), a City God temple without a stage, or a City God temple festival without a stage performance held to entertain the god and secure his protection and blessings.

This paper examines the form and transformation of the temple theatre – the permanent theatre structure built in the temple compounds – as a sacred space for ritual performance and a secular space for theatrical entertainment in China through a case study of the Yuci City God Temple in Jinzhong City, Shanxi. First built in 1362, the temple boasts one of the oldest surviving City God temples in China. Drawing upon archival, archaeological, architectural and anthropological evidence, the paper begins with a historical survey of the cult of the City God, the construction of City God temples with theatre stages and the celebration of City God temple festivals with ritual/theatrical performances in late imperial China, followed by an investigation into their implications for the development of Chinese temple theatre and architecture. The paper then looks into the layout and structure of the Yuci City God Temple with focus on its theatre stage in association with ritual/theatrical performance. This study shows that the form of temple theatre architecture co-evolved with the development of religious ritual, Chinese theatre and community life. It contributes an enhanced understanding of the entangled relationship between temples, temple theatres and temple festivals in China.

ZHENG, Man (Free University of Berlin)

*The Reproduction and Transformation of the 1598 Shanhai Yudi Quantu in Late Ming Dynasty: A Study of Knowledge Circulation and Wang Yangming School’s Influence During the Ming-Jesuit Mapping Encounter*

This paper examines the reproduction and knowledge transformation of the 1598 Jesuit-made *Shanhai Yudi Quantu 山海輿地全圖* [*Complete Map of Mountains and Seas]* in various anthologies and encyclopedias compiled by local scholars and literati in the late Ming Dynasty. While past researches have primarily focused on the contents of the original map and of the abridged and simplified forms in local publications, criticizing the errors that arose during the reproduction process and introspecting the sciolism and superficiality of local literati in comprehending and accepting new knowledge, little attention has been paid to the agency of the local protagonists involved in this reproduction and circulation process. This study will fill this gap by examining these scholars’ social and cultural background and ideological orientation, their motivation for including the Jesuit-made European-style map in their collections, their rationale for producing abridged and reduced versions of a large single sheet map in a printed book, and their views on the alleged lost of accuracy, through the analysis of prefaces to these anthologies and encyclopedias, annotations to the reduced map, related local gazetteers, and *Ming Shilu 明實錄 [Ming Veritable Records]*. And since the main figures associated with this reproduction and transformation process, Zhang Huang 章潢, Feng Yingjing 馮應京, and Guo Zizhang 郭子章, were all followers of the Wang Yangming school, this paper also explores the relationship between the late Ming Wang school’s interpersonal network and the circulation space of Jesuit-made maps.

ZOU, Xiqian (Tsinghua University), NA Yuxiang(Jinan University), OU Xiang (Nanning Normal University)

*A Study on the Types of Fertility Perceptions and their Influencing Factors Among the Marriageable Youth Group of Generation Z: Evidence Based on Latent Classic Analysis*

This study examined the types of fertility perceptions and their influencing factors among the marriageable young people of Generation Z based on the Chinese Family Panel Studies (CFPS) data in 2020 using latent classic analysis. The results show that this group can be classified into four types, namely, “family responsibility” (53%), “self-pleasure” (10%), “low fertility desire” (9%), and “personal responsibility” (28%). Compared to the mainstream “family responsibility”, those with lower income and education levels and lower perceived severity of housing problems are more likely to have a “self-pleasant” fertility concept. The perceived severity of social security problems is a key obstacle to the “low fertility desire” fertility concept; the lower the income, the lower the life satisfaction, and the more serious the perceived gap of wealth, the more inclined the group is to have a “personal responsibility” fertility concept. It is suggested that in the future, we need to focus on the intergenerational transmission of the “family-oriented” concept, change the “coercive” thinking of fertility to the “guidance” development, and improve the implementation of supporting measures for social fertility protection to eliminate low fertility desire.