



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
School of Humanities · The University of Hong Kong

14th SPRING HISTORY SYMPOSIUM

9-10 MAY 2025

GLOBAL ENCOUNTERS:

*Bodies, Commodities, and Technologies
on the Move*

The 14th Spring History Symposium

Organised by the Department of History

The University of Hong Kong

9–10 May 2025

Global Encounters:

Bodies, Commodities, and Technologies

on the Move

University of Hong Kong

Centennial Campus

Central Podium Levels (CPD)

2.58 and 2.42

Support for the Spring History Symposium has been generously provided by the Faculty of Arts, the School of Humanities, and the Department of History of the University of Hong Kong



The conference has also been supported by the Postgraduate Students Conference / Seminar Grants of the Research Grants Council, Hong Kong.

Global Encounters:

Bodies, Commodities, and Technologies on the Move

The modern world has been and is increasingly shaped by cross-border movements. In most cases, people serve as the agents of such movements. People of various occupations, including intellectuals, merchants, diplomats, soldiers, missionaries, craftsmen, and artists, among others, and encompassing those of diverse gender, race, and national identities, in crossing paths with each other beyond borders, have sparked some of the most significant creations and conflicts in history. The web of global movement, however, extends beyond people alone. Business exchanges and the quest for scientific knowledge, as common interests shared around the world, have mobilized and redirected human efforts with remarkable momentum, forming extensive networks often unnoticed by people within them. Commodity circulation and the dissemination of science and technologies thus provide new vantage points from which to observe and re-examine historical linkages that were previously ignored and to rethink the meanings of global encounters.

This year, the Spring History Symposium provides a space for postgraduates and early career scholars to present research centering on global encounters and movements, focusing on both human stories across various sectors and those narratives where commodities and technologies take center stage.

Day 1: Friday, 9 May 2025		
8:00–9:00	CPD 2.58	Registration and Refreshments
9:00–9:15	CPD 2.58	Opening Remarks
9:15–10:45	CPD 2.58	Panel 1: Business Beyond Borders
11:00–12:30	CPD 2.58	Panel 2A: Nation, Empire, and Representation on the International Stage
	CPD 2.42	Panel 2B: Tradition and Innovation: Human Interventions in the Environment
12:30–2:00		Lunch
2:00–3:30	CPD 2.58	Panel 3A: Knowledge Transmission: Protection, Negotiation, and Exchange
	CPD 2.42	Panel 3B: Print Culture and Knowledge Circulation
3:45–5:15	CPD 2.58	Keynote Lecture

Day 2: Saturday, 10 May 2025		
8:00–9:00	CPD 2.58	Registration and Refreshments
9:00–10:30	CPD 2.58	Panel 4: Travellers Abroad: Encounters with Otherness
10:45–12:15	CPD 2.58	Panel 5A: Shaping Mass Culture
	CPD 2.42	Panel 5B: Art and Performance on the Move
12:15–2:00		Lunch
2:00–3:30	CPD 2.58	Panel 6A: Migration and Surveillance
	CPD 2.42	Panel 6B: Nation, Culture, and Tradition in the Making of Modern Spaces
3:45–5:15	CPD 2.58	Panel 7: Medicine and Sanitary Regimes
5:15–5:30	CPD 2.58	Closing Remarks

Keynote:
The Chinese Question:
Migration, Exclusion, and Resistance in the West, 1850-
1910

Mae NGAI
Columbia University

Discussant:
Loretta KIM
University of Hong Kong

Friday, 9 May, 3:45–5:15
CPD 2.58

-

Taking a global and comparative approach, my work situates Chinese emigration to the anglophone West (the U.S. and the British settler colonies) during the 19 century in the context of broader dynamics of global trade and finance and the rise of Great Britain and then the United States as the premier global economic hegemons—as creditors and as colonizers, as nation builders and as empire builders. Because China was never formally colonized, the Western powers used measures like unequal treaties after the Opium Wars (1839-1860) and the exclusion laws (1875-1910) as instruments of colonialism and containment. The exclusion laws aimed to contain China, to limit the mobility of its people to the West. The idea that Chinese people should be excluded from

immigration and citizenship was a radical idea in the late nineteenth century because it contravened prevailing norms of free trade and free migration. Chinese exclusion, born of a powerful alchemy of race and money, was part of a new way of imagining, organizing, and governing the world.

The exclusion laws also shaped the development of Chinese diasporic communities in the West—their social life, political economies, their relationship to Qing officials, and their participation in anti-Qing politics and the emergence of modern Chinese national identity.

Mae M. Ngai is Lung Family Professor of Asian American Studies and Professor of History at Columbia University. She is a U.S. legal and political historian interested in the histories of immigration, citizenship, nationalism, and the Chinese diaspora. She is author of the award winning *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (2004); *The Lucky Ones: One Family and the Extraordinary Invention of Chinese America* (2010); and *The Chinese Question: The Gold Rushes and Global Politics* (2021); and coeditor of Corky Lee's *Asian America: Fifty Year of Photographic Justice* (2024). Ngai has written on immigration history and policy for the Washington Post, New York Times, Los Angeles Times, the Atlantic, the Nation, and Dissent. Before becoming a historian she was a labor-union organizer and educator in New York City, working for District 65-UAW and the Consortium for Worker Education. She is now writing *Nation of Immigrants: A Short History of an Idea* (under contract with Princeton University Press).

A native of the United States, **Loretta Kim** 金由美 is a graduate of Harvard University (BA, MA, PhD) and was formerly an assistant professor at the State University of New York (Albany) and Hong Kong Baptist University before joining SMLC. She is a historian of late imperial and modern China and has taught courses on modern Asia, colonialism and imperialism in Southeast Asia, and Sino-Russian relations. Her primary research areas include the history of Inner Asia from 1600 to the

present, comparative history of borderlands and frontiers, and Chinese ethnic minority languages and literature, particularly Manchu and Mongolian.

Dr. Kim's first single-authored monograph is about the Orochen people in northern Heilongjiang during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). Her second major work is a co-authored monograph about the Russian Orthodox Church in Hong Kong. She completed a GRF-funded project about non-Han names in Northeast China from 1600 to 1900 [<https://www.lekresearchcollective.net/>] and is working on a third monograph about food resources and culinary practices in the Amur River region and co-editing two volumes about the history of Northeast Asia.

Day 1

Friday, 9 May 2025

Opening Remarks

9:00–9:15

CPD 2.58

John CARROLL, *University of Hong Kong*

Department of History

Principal Lecturer

Programme Director, MA in Hong Kong History

Panel 1:

Business Beyond Borders

9:15–10:45

CPD 2.58

Chair: WU Jiarui, *University of Hong Kong*

Mindy SU, *Yale University*

Japan's Match Industry at the Turn of the 20th Century: viewing
from a glocal perspective

Abstract:

This presentation explores the origins and development of Japan's match industry at the turn of the 20th century from a transnational perspective. First invented by English chemist John Walker in 1826, modern friction matches had become a daily household item in East Asian markets by the late 19th century. In the 1870s, in order to prevent further trade deficits, the Meiji bureaucrats such as Yoshii Tomozane encouraged the Japanese industrialists to learn match production techniques from the Europeans and set up indigenous match factories. This archetype of "import-substitution industrialization" in the late 19th century

soon transitioned into “export- oriented industrialization” as Japan joined the ranks of the world’s largest match exporters- second only to Sweden and the USA- by World War I. Further, among all the Japanese industrial sectors at the turn of the 20th century, the match exports were one of the most profitable- second only to the textiles. Some might consider the early history of the Japanese match industry as yet another instance in which the Asian late developer successfully copied and indigenized western technical knowledge; the paper argues that such linear understanding is partial at best. To account for the success story of the Japanese match industry at the turn of the century, this presentation invites audience to consider both production and circulation sides of the industrial development. First, the presentation will show the pivotal roles that the overseas Chinese merchants played in the development of the Japanese match industry- particularly, in introducing the Japanese-made matches into the Chinese and Southeast Asian markets. Second, the presentation will demonstrate that the modern match industry adapted to and took roots in the Japanese social fabrics by exploiting the labor of the urban poor and especially that of the Japanese social minority, burakumin. This presentation aims to explicate how the global processes of industrialization unfolded in a Japanese local setting.

Biography:

Mindy Su is a PhD candidate in the Department of History at Yale University, specializing in modern East Asian history. Her dissertation uses the Japanese port city Kobe to re-think the early history of industrial capitalism in East Asia from the perspective of marginalized people and trans-local connections. This project explores the intersection of urban history, business history, and history of migration in modern East Asia. She is a recipient of the Japan Foundation Japanese Studies Doctoral Fellowship, and currently a visiting researcher at the University of Tokyo.

Gabriel Antonio SOLIS, *Columbia University*

“The Cold War’s Factories: Anti-communism and the Making of the Global Factory in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico and Kaohsiung, Taiwan”

Abstract:

In the late 1960s, as movements for decolonization and revolutionary socialism swept through Asia and Latin America, Mexico and the Republic of China (Taiwan) took decisive steps to open their borders ever wider to foreign capitalist investment. In a shift away from earlier economic strategies, the Republic of China’s Nationalist Party (KMT) and Mexico’s Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) enacted new statutes in the 1960s allowing foreign manufacturers to operate in cordoned-off economic zones, with the stated goal of stimulating rapid industrialization. Although export-led industrialization in Mexico and Taiwan drew from distinct economic conditions, their mutual embrace of export manufacturing contributed to the emergence of globalized manufacturing and a new chapter in the history of what Barbara Ehrenreich and Annette Fuentes termed “the global factory.”

This presentation, drawn from a longer chapter-length paper on the first maquiladora industrial park in Ciudad Juárez and the first Export Processing Zone in Kaohsiung, focuses on how the ideological conflicts of the Cold War set the stage for the making of the first export-industrial zones in Taiwan in Mexico. Drawing from multi-lingual archival research conducted in Taiwan and the U.S.-Mexico Border, argues for the decisive role of Cold War geopolitics in the early boom of global manufacturing. Rather than “free trade,” 1960s and 1970s export-promoters leaned on the rhetorical repertoire of the “free world,” tethering export-manufacturing to global anti-communist networks as well as transnational capital.

Biography:

Gabriel Antonio Solis is a historian and writer from the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, studying the history of the Global Factory in Mexico and East Asia. He also written on border culture, politics and history for non-academic outlets such as *Wired*, *Spectre* and *The Drift*. He will receive his PhD in History from Columbia University in May of 2025 and is beginning a postdoctoral fellowship at the Centre for Cultural Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in the Fall of 2025.

PENG Jin, *City University of Hong Kong*

Turning Tea Dust into Gold: Russian Entrepreneurs and Brick Tea Production in Hankow, 1861 – 1881

Abstract:

This article examines the brick tea production led by Russian entrepreneurs in Hankow from 1861 to 1881, and explores how they successfully organized an efficient production model in China that was highly targeted to Siberian consumer markets and renewed the patterns of Chinese tea production in the aftermath of the Second Opium War. Since Hankow opened as a treaty port in 1861, a small group of Russian tea entrepreneurs actively engaged in the brick tea trade in Central China by taking advantage of the new commercial opportunity. Relying on the assistance of the local merchant groups and the Russian diplomats in China, Russian entrepreneurs successfully adapted to the Chinese commercial environment and controlled the whole brick tea manufacturing process in tea production districts such as Yang Lou Dong in Central China in the first decades after Hankow opened. When relocating the factories to Hankow in the early 1870s, Russian entrepreneurs became the first group of foreign merchants to establish modern factories and introduce machines for manufacturing tea in the Chinese treaty ports, making the brick tea industry one of the earliest modern industries in China. Benefiting from the investment in technology innovation and modern management, Russian entrepreneurs made the previously

less-favored tea dust into a new stylish international product on the assembly line in their tea factories, earning the preference of Siberian consumers. By mainly using the archives of Russian merchants, Chinese maritime customs and British consular officials in Hankow, a thorough examination of this transnational trade issue also reveals the dynamics of foreign enterprises in modern China and the economic cooperation and conflicts between China and Russia in China's treaty ports in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Biography:

Peng Jin is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Chinese and History of City University of Hong Kong. Her research interests include the study of labor, technology, imperialism, transportation and inter-Asian connections, with transregional focuses on China, Russia, Mongolia, and Eastern Europe as well as the UK. She is currently doing her Ph.D. project on the Sino-Russian tea industry in the nineteenth Century.

Panel 2A:

Nation, Empire, and Representation on the International Stage

11:00–12:30

CPD 2.58

Chair: Nicole VAUGHAN, *University of Hong Kong*

Jason BUTTERS, *Columbia University; Waseda University*

Building a Cultural Relations Consensus: Nationalism, internationalism, and imperial coronations in Japanese state-led tourism promotion media, 1912-1929

Abstract:

A study of the use of culture for state power, this paper examines how Japanese tourism promoters represented the 1928 coronation of Emperor Hirohito to international audiences. At its

heart is an analysis of magazines printed by the Japan Tourist Bureau (JTB) of the Imperial Ministry of Railways and those from JTB-affiliated organizations and individuals worldwide. These sources are used to show how officials mobilized the coronation to introduce and promote so-called Japanese culture, specific aspects of Asian history, and proclamations about the role of the Japanese nation and empire in the contemporary world. In order to explain this strategy, the paper identifies the 1928 media blitz as part of a larger project initiated by railway bureaucrats at the founding of the JTB in 1912 to develop cultural promotion as a means for state power in international relations. Meanwhile, railway and foreign ministry sources show how JTB leaders, international thinkers, and other policymaking offices of the state debated the value of this “cultural policy.” With these perspectives this research argues: (1) that the use of the 1928 coronation in state-led tourism media represented a breakthrough in the establishment of a cultural policy consensus; and (2), that this achievement influenced state leadership’s later commitment to cultural diplomacy and culture-based propaganda as a means for national and imperial interests. To these ends, the paper concludes by referencing the comparatively well studied 1930s, outlining the consequential relationship between the cultural promotion innovated by JTB officials and the cultural diplomacy and propaganda deployed by the Japanese state throughout the Fifteen Years War (1931-1945) and, indeed, ever since. Thus, the paper connects with scholarship on interwar and trans-WWII internationalism, transnational flows of people and ideas, and state power in order to contribute an intellectual and political history of cultural diplomacy in the modern world.

Biography:

Jason Butters is a History-East Asia Ph.D. candidate researching transregional intellectual and cultural exchange through imperial Japan. His interests include cultural exchange and cultural relations across the twentieth-century world; the international history of states’ uses of culture for power; the relationship

between liberal internationalism, cultural nationalism, and state power; and Tokyo as a centre of global flows of peoples, ideas, and things. These subjects reflect his background in social, cultural, and intellectual historical methods, his experience with a diversity of types of sources, and ongoing reading of theories of power. Before beginning at Columbia, Jason completed a BA and MA (history) at Concordia University (Montréal, '14 and '16) and an MA from Kobe University's Graduate School of Law ('20). Jason is from British Columbia, Canada.

Masooma ZAFAR, *Nanyang Technological University*

Exoticized and Feared: Indian Objects and British Gaze in Late Victorian London

Abstract:

Objects have the power to control human emotions, shaping perceptions and reinforcing ideologies. The 1886 Colonial Indian Exhibition, held at Crystal Palace in London, exemplified this phenomenon by presenting crude Indian exhibits that stimulated fear and disgust among visitors. Colonizers displayed deities, gods and goddesses, ferocious animals in forest settings, carved frightening scenes, models of aboriginal tribes, and ancient arms and armor to highlight what they perceived as the crudeness of Indian society. These exhibits framed Indians as “savages,” “premodern,” and “uncivilized,” invoking emotional responses that reinforced colonial narratives of superiority.

Cross-cultural encounters with these crude exhibits intensified the emotions of fear and disgust among the foreign visitors. The exhibition's jungle model, for instance, featured waving bamboo, towering palm trees, wild vines, and rocky landscapes under a vast blue sky. Within this setting, realistic depictions of a crawling lizard, a panther, a bear, an ibex, peacocks, and a wild goat further unsettled viewer. The presence of such ferocious animals led visitors to associate India with backwardness and a world still dominated by nature rather than civilization.

Through the exhibitions, colonial powers cultivated an image of South Asia as mystical yet primitive. Orientalist representations in art and exhibitions romanticized the region while concealing the realities of colonial exploitation. The exoticization served as justification of British domination by portraying South Asians as culturally inferior while simultaneously marketing South Asian objects as unique and desirable commodities. This study integrates material culture and the history of emotions to explore the emotive properties of Indian exhibits (specifically how British people encounters with Indian commodities/objects shape their perception about India) and their role in reinforcing imperial ideologies.

Biography:

Masooma Zafar is a third-year PhD (History) student at the School of Humanities, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. For her PhD, she is working to explore the formation of memories of Partition among migrants from India to Pakistan, particularly in Lahore, and the overlap of these memories with the memory produced by institutions such as museums. Her research interests include the Partition of India, Modern South Asia, Memory, and Material Culture.

She has done her Masters and MPhil in History from the Department of History and Pakistan Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

After completing her MPhil in History, she joined the Institute of History, Government College University, Lahore, Pakistan as a Research Associate. During her time as a Research Associate, she conducted extensive fieldwork and archival research, connected to various cultural aspects of the Partition of India.

FANG Yi, *University of Hong Kong*

Economic Competition in an Exposition: China's Commercial Warfare at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition

Abstract:

Historians have examined international expositions through broadly defined cultural perspectives. Few attention, however, has been directed to the economic significance of these events. This paper explores the economic dynamics in an international exposition and its role in the broader global economic networks by examining a case study about China's participation in the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (PPIE), which was held in San Francisco in 1915. It shows that international expositions in the early twentieth century served as an important opportunity for non-Western nations to navigate their business interests and assert global influence.

Viewing the PPIE as an opportunity to revitalize Chinese export amid intense international competition, Chinese exhibition managers strove to present a panorama of the nation's natural produce at the fair. In particular, they attempted to craft an economic identity for China as an agricultural power in the world by subjecting Chinese products to public contests of award. This emphasis on competition and awards, instead of a more comprehensive representation through design and display of exhibits, marked a special way a non-Western nation capitalized on international expositions to advance their business interest. In order to prepare for the contest of awards, Chinese exposition officials implemented pedagogical projects to teach merchants Western merchandising methods, before these methods were commonly employed in China's business operation. In this way, China's participation in the PPIE exemplifies the role of international expositions in shaping global business dynamics and facilitating the transfer of knowledge between industrialized and unindustrialized markets.

Biography:

Fang Yi is a PhD candidate in the Department of History at the University of Hong Kong. She previously received a master's degree in history from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and a bachelor's degree in English from Nankai University, China. Her research investigates the multifaceted relationships between China and the world from the 17th to the 20th centuries, with a particular emphasis on economic and cultural exchanges. Her current dissertation project analyzes China's participation in the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition. This research highlights the exposition as a crucial moment in China's integration into the global business system and explores its meaningful legacy in China's economic and industrial modernization.

Panel 2B:

Tradition and Innovation: Human Interventions in the Environment

11:00–12:30

CPD 2.42

Chair: Linqun MA, *King's College London, University of Hong Kong*

Rebecca Si-ning WANG, *University of Hong Kong*

“Visitors Which Have Come to Stay”: Perceptions toward Native, Introduced and Invasive Species in Mid to Late 20th-Century Hong Kong

Abstract:

On its surface, the term “Invasive Alien Species (or IAS)” in ecology seems quite well-defined: wildlife which is not native to a particular locality which adversely affects its new environment. However, when examined through a historical and sociocultural lens, ambiguities begin to emerge.

As territorial borders are human constructs by which wildlife are not bound, what is or isn't invasive is heavily influenced by anthropogenic spatial and temporal boundaries combined with subjective priorities, not a matter of pure biological concern. This interdisciplinary investigation highlights how Hong Kong attitudes toward a species origin developed during the mid-to-late 20th century. Organized in three sections, it addresses fundamental questions on global encounters and cross-border movements of "native" and "introduced" terrestrial wildlife.

Firstly, the wildlife legislation and scientific literature of colonial Hong Kong is contrasted with that of the British metropole. Differing regional priorities after WWII is highlighted as a key point of policy divergence, the impact of which is still seen today.

Next, the paper explores how wildlife was managed in Hong Kong compared to Singapore (another British colony with similar climatic characteristics). Location along migratory pathways and natural history records undoubtedly played a role in reducing the presence of aggressive IAS control measures in Hong Kong.

Lastly, the study considers the cultural and symbolic values vested in Hong Kong's "naturalized" species, further emphasizing the region's unique attitudes towards "non-native" wildlife. Rather than mirror biosecurity anxieties found worldwide, these hybrid organisms became an integral part of the region's identity formation immediately prior to Hong Kong's 1997 Handover.

Through examining ecological terms under human frameworks, this study addresses knowledge gaps at the intersection of natural history and ecological research. Overall, understanding historical factors which shape natural world perceptions is vital for developing impactful environmental management strategies in today's world.

Biography:

Rebecca S. Wang is an interdisciplinary researcher specializing in the areas of science education, natural history and entomology. Currently pursuing a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice and FHEA at the University of Hong Kong (HKU), she is also a Common Core tutor with the Faculty of Education, fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration between students to bridge the “two cultures” of academic life.

Rebecca holds an MPhil in Biological Sciences (Zoology) from the University of Cambridge where researched the impact oil palm replanting strategies have toward spider assemblages and their pest control abilities. Prior to her masters, she earned her BSc from HKU with a double major in Ecology and History. In her final year, she both won the UG Wang Gungwu Prize for History and placed on the Science Dean’s Honor List for her capstone projects.

In addition to her academic roles and achievements, Rebecca frequently volunteers with the Hong Kong Biodiversity Museum, applying her entomology expertise toward the ongoing preservation, curation and digitization of insect collections. Overall, Rebecca’s research work aims to contribute a greater understanding and appreciation of how historical contexts shape contemporary scientific and ecological issues.

FU Jiaying, *Lingnan University*

The Making of "South China Fruits": George Weidman Groff's Research on Kwangtung Local Fruits and Sino-American Agricultural Exchange (1907-1937)

Abstract:

With the expansion of Western scientific influence in the early 20th century, China’s agricultural model underwent significant reform within a global context. Between 1907 and 1937, George Weidman Groff, the first American agricultural missionary to China, served as a professor of agronomy at Lingnan University in

Guangzhou. Leveraging the unique characteristics of Guangdong, Groff focused on transforming the region's agricultural practices with "fruit" as a core element. His work in the transformation of Lingnan's fruit agriculture can be conceptualized in three stages: survey, improvement, and reciprocity. Firstly, after more than a decade of research on Guangdong's fruit agriculture, Groff authored *The Lychee and Lungan*, the first scientific study of Chinese lychees and longans, formally incorporating these crops into the global agricultural science framework. Secondly, Groff improved Guangdong papaya by introducing seedlings from Hawaii and Southeast Asia, enhancing the fruit's quality from a "dry and tough" to a "sweet and soft" local specialty, thereby aligning agricultural practices with the economic interests of local peasants. Thirdly, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, he established a citrus germplasm station to cultivate cold-resistant citrus varieties and explored ecological pest control methods, utilizing ants "*Oecophylla smaragdina*" to eliminate citrus pests in rural Guangzhou. Drawing on archives from the Guangdong Provincial Archives, Lingnan University, as well as scientific journals and publications, this paper challenges the prevailing stereotype of foreign agricultural experts in China as "agricultural explorers" with colonial sense. Furthermore, this paper highlights that in contrast to the University of Nanking (金陵大學) model that emphasized the introduction of American crops, Groff developed an alternative research paradigm focused on the systematic enhancement of indigenous species through strategic utilization of global germplasm resources, which made the plant breeding of regionally distinctive fruits into emblematic features of South China's agricultural modernization.

Biography:

Fu Jiaying is an MPhil candidate in the Department of History at Lingnan University, Hong Kong, where she contributes to the University History Project as a part-time Research Assistant and Archivist. Her scholarly work traverses the intersections of global history, modern Chinese history, and the history of science, with

a particular focus on the transformative role of scientific progress in shaping historical narratives—both within China and across the world.

Lizan BAI, *Tsinghua University*

The Chinese Agricultural Treatises for Locust Control and the Human-Locust Relationship of China in the Reports of the United States Entomological Commission

Abstract:

In the 1870s, in response to widespread locust infestations in the Midwest, the U.S. government allocated funds and established the United States Entomological Commission to address this challenge through scientific research. The commission's scholars systematically summarized historical global experiences with insect pests, including some of the Chinese agricultural writings related to locusts spanning the previous millennium such as the “Xining Edict” (熙寧詔), the “Chunxi Edict” (淳熙敕), and “Manners of Destroying the Locust” (捕蝗法) from the Song Dynasty, along with the debate between Chief Minister Yao Chong (姚崇) and officials Ni Ruoshui (倪若水) and Lu Huaishen (盧懷慎) from the Tang Dynasty, as documented in the agricultural treatise *Jiu huang huo min shu* (《救荒活民書》), translated by the renowned Russian sinologist K. A. Skachkov. This introduction of Chinese perspectives on the human-locust relationship probably aimed to present a model in which rationality triumphs over superstition, addressing the social divergence surrounding locust control in America during that period. This study offers further evidence of a more multi-directional approach to global knowledge exchange facilitated by scholarly publishing networks in the late 19th century.

Biography:

Lizan Bai (拜李贊), born in September 1996, a native of Xi'an (西安), Shaanxi (陝西) Province. I am in the third year of my

Ph.D. program at Tsinghua University, under the guidance of Prof. Mei Xueqin (梅雪芹). My research centres on environmental history, with a particular emphasis on the jute industry of the 19th century in the South Asian subcontinent. Additionally, I am exploring the technologies employed for locust management that were exchanged among colonial powers during this period.

Panel 3A:

Knowledge Transmission: Protection, Negotiation, and Exchange

2:00–3:30

CPD 2.58

Chair: PENG Jin, *City University of Hong Kong*

WANG Ningyuan, *University of Hong Kong*

Merchants as the “State”: An Aspect of the Merchant-State Relationship in Trademark Protection in Republican China (1912-1928)

Abstract:

This study examines how merchants strategically simulated and manipulated the state in shaping the new trademark regime amidst the pressures of market competition and increasing state regulation in early twentieth-century China. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on how the state imposed top-down legal changes in the development of trademark law, this study adopts a bottom-up approach. It examines the agency, practice, and impacts of the Chinese merchants in the transplantation and development of trademark regimes in the Beiyang Period (1912-1928). It makes an original contribution by uncovering the broader relationship between the state, merchants, and the law in developing a modern legal-commercial order in China, specifically focusing on the trademark regime. Drawing on previously unexplored archival

resources, primarily historical records of the chambers of commerce and the government archives spanning from 1912 to 1928, the article argues that Chinese merchants served the state's function and played a significant role in the making of the new trademark regime. They did act as collaborators with the state. However, they also served as the state. This article elaborates that merchants in early twentieth-century China were well united and connected in several groups, forming a cohesive network for trademark protection. Additionally, merchants are architects of an independent trademark system for trademark management and dispute resolution.

Biography:

WANG Ningyuan is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Law, the University of Hong Kong. Her research interest lies in the legal history of China, especially the early Republican period.

WANG Xun, *National University of Singapore*

Intra-Asia Flows of Knowledge and Technology: Localizing China's Steel Technology at Vietnam's Thái Nguyên Steelworks, 1958–1969

Abstract:

In the 1960s, workers and experts of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) constructed and brought into operation the Thái Nguyên Steelworks, with assistance from China. As Vietnam's first iron and steel plant and China's first large-scale foreign technical assistance project, the Thái Nguyên Steelworks offers a critical case for examining the transnational flow of industrial knowledge and technology across the China–Vietnam border. Drawing upon Vietnamese and Chinese archival sources, this research focuses on the formative period of the Thái Nguyên Steelworks, from 1958 to 1969, when it was planned, built, and put into production for the first time. It argues that the Vietnamese actors' familiarity with local sociopolitical and environmental conditions influenced development and facilitated the adaptation of the Thái Nguyên Steelworks. While

conventional studies emphasize the Chinese role in shaping their foreign assistance projects, this study challenges that perspective by highlighting the agency of Vietnamese experts and workers. Additionally, it contributes to broader discussions on the history of technology in Asia by focusing on Southeast Asia, which is less addressed in historical narratives of technology and industrialization.

Biography:

Wang Xun is a Ph.D. Candidate at the Department of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore. Her research focuses on the history of technological development in Vietnam since 1945, examining intersections between technology, environmental change, and social transformation. Her dissertation explores the development of Vietnam's iron and steel industry and its broader socioeconomic and ecological implications.

Panel 3B:

Print Culture and Knowledge Circulation

2:00–3:30

CPD 2.42

Chair: OUYANG, Jiaorui (Uranus), *University of Hong Kong*

Yun XIE, *Ghent University*

Printing Technology and Colonial Language Policy: A Case Study of Multilingual Texts on 19th-Century Java Banknotes

Abstract:

This article adopts a progressive approach to explore the challenges of 19th-century multilingual printing in the Dutch East Indies, first examining the unique multilingual cultural environment and colonial policies as a backdrop, before focusing on the technological challenges of printing non-Latin scripts,

particularly Chinese. First, the study uses the four scripts—Dutch, Malay, Javanese, and Chinese—featured on Javanese banknotes as an entry point to illustrate the multilingual cultural landscape of the Dutch East Indies. Next, it examines the Dutch colonial language policy within this multilingual context, which promoted inclusivity and coexistence rather than enforcing a singular linguistic dominance. Subsequently, the article analyzes how the multilingual environment and language policies created a demand for diverse typefaces, leading to significant technical challenges, particularly for Chinese script. These challenges spurred the development of innovative technological solutions. This demand also fostered the emergence of new structures for knowledge production, with linguists actively contributing to the printing industry, and facilitated the formation of interconnected knowledge networks involving the Dutch colonial government, printers, linguists, type designers, and missionaries. Finally, the article reflects on the continuity of knowledge production processes. It argues that the integration of new non-Latin scripts necessitated close collaboration between scholars and the printing industry. This cooperative model, first established during the early days of printing, resurfaced in response to the renewed technological demands of the 19th century.

Biography:

Yun Xie is a PhD candidate in the Department of History at Ghent University, specializing in the history of printing and history of knowledge in the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies, with a particular focus on non-Latin scripts. She earned her BA in Art History from the University of Amsterdam and her MA in Art History from Utrecht University. Her master thesis on the history of Hong Kong typefaces and its worldwide social networks was awarded the Tiele Stichting Annual Thesis Prize (2022). She has also been a recipient of the Brill Fellowship, Joh. Enschedé Fellowship, and Allard Pierson Fellowship.

JIANG, Wei (Eric), *The Chinese University of Hong Kong*
Knowledge in Circulation: *The Strand Magazine* in Early
Twentieth Century Shanghai

Abstract:

This article seeks to prove that *The Strand Magazine* (1891–1950) has not only revolutionized the landscape of middlebrow periodical in the Anglophone world since its debut in Late Victorian Britain, itself having also fertilized numerous Chinese periodical publications during the Late Qing and the Early Republican period. The historical importance of the *Strand* needs no further introduction. Self-positing as a middlebrow periodical, the popular magazine has been a publishing milestone which strives to provide light and healthy entertainment to its intended readership, i.e., the uprising middle class since the Late Victorian period. Along with the trade route of British imperialism and colonialism, *The Strand Magazine* and its siblings were carried into treaty port cities of China via different channels. Extant evidence indicates that the *Strand* could be accessed easily in Shanghai by the turn of the twentieth century owing to an ever-growing body of petite bourgeoisie to be entertained. Not only did the foreign dwellers read the *Strand* for amusement, local intelligentsia who sought to provide similar kind of entertainment for the Chinese audience would also select and translate pieces from the magazine and sent it to local middlebrow periodicals in exchange for pecuniary reward. This paper attempts to chart out the type and scope of contents that have been translated from the *Strand* and re-circulated in the Chinese middlebrow journals during the said period. By taxonomizing and analyzing the translated materials of every possible kinds—be it textual, editorial, or pictorial—this paper attempts to substantiate the indispensable and exclusive role that the *Strand* magazine has played in the cultural configuration of Shanghai modernity.

Biography:

JIANG Wei has passed his viva and is expected to receive his doctorate in due course. He is trained in the background of translation studies and specializes in the studies of translated crime fiction between English and Chinese during the Late Qing and the Republican period (1890s–1940s). Both his M.Phil. and Ph.D. projects investigate the translational activities of the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School, a loosely defined literary coterie that are known for their prolific production of middlebrow fiction, writing and translation all included. In addition to his research in genre studies, he is interested in urban studies, history of books and publishing, as well as popular culture in early twentieth century.

LE Ha Thu Oanh Alicia, *University of Hong Kong*

Print and Children: Modern Vietnamese Press and Its Tales of Childhood

Abstract:

This presentation surveys the emergence of modern Vietnamese literature vis-à-vis the question of indigenous children and childhood in the first four decades of the 20th century, when literature composed in Quốc ngữ (modern Vietnamese script) was being reshaped, reformed, influenced and inspired by forces of Western fiction, especially the art of the French novels. In identifying and examining titles from the France-Vietnam collection, a joint project between the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Vietnam National Library, I propose a comparative reading in a series of binaries: works of non-fiction and fiction - translated then original - between the secular and the Catholic worlds - constituting the separate yet overlapping genres of literature about childhood and children's literature. In the first half, the presentation examines Imprimerie de Quinon, the main imprint of the Missions étrangères de Paris (MEP) in Annam (modern-day Central Vietnam), which pioneered a considerable amount of child-related volumes for the Catholic communities

including advice manuals by Priest Simon Chính, Huỳnh Trước and the original novel *Hai chị em lưu lạc* (Two Wandering Siblings, 1927) by Priest Pierre Lục, now widely recognised as the first original Vietnamese novel for children. In the second half, I narrate a tale of mistaken identities of two colonial intellectuals among the archival grains: the “modern barbarian” Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh (1882-1936), famed Tonkinese translator of popular Western children’s literature, and the Cochinchinese intellectual Nguyễn Văn Vinh (1885-1935), writer of early Cochinchinese fiction blending traditional Confucian morality with a moderate collaborative colonial outlook. Together, the presentation paints a vibrant and diverse literary landscape of colonial Vietnam where the position of children and their childhood have come to occupy a significant space in the text and the home, the first zone of contact with contesting visions of modern secular and Catholic world-building.

Biography:

Born and raised in Vietnam, LE Ha Thu Oanh Alicia holds a Bachelor of Arts in Comparative Literature and Hong Kong Studies from the University of Hong Kong. After over two years of professional employment in the higher education and IT sectors, she returns to her alma mater to read an MPhil in History with an intersectional focus on modern Vietnamese history and childhood history. Her current research charts the construction of a modern indigenous childhood under the banner of Franco-annamite collaboration from 1918 to Vietnamese independence in 1945. Introducing a wide range of understudied materials such as advice manuals, modern fiction, theatre manuscripts and memoirs, the research identifies the home as the site for childhood incubation and intimacy, and as the contact zone with contesting visions of childhood in the secular and Catholic worlds. Alicia’s other research interests include Sino-Vietnamese historical relations, colonial aesthetics and postcolonial nostalgia, and contemporary visual cultures from Southeast Asia. Her creative writing and translations have appeared on Zzz Review (Vietnam),

Mekong Review (Southeast Asia), Canto Cutie (USA), The Primer (UK), This Is Southeast Asia (Australia), The Newsletter of the IAS, Leiden University (The Netherlands), and are forthcoming elsewhere.

Keynote Lecture

3:45–5:15

CPD 2.58

The Chinese Question: Migration, Exclusion, and Resistance in the West, 1850-1910

Mae NGAI, *Columbia University*

Discussant: Loretta KIM, *University of Hong Kong*

Day 2

Saturday, 10 May 2025

Panel 4:

Travellers Abroad: Encounters with Otherness

9:00–10:30

CPD 2.58

Chair: FANG Yi, *University of Hong Kong*

Måns AHLSTEDT ÅBERG, *University of Hong Kong*

Silent travellers? Native Chinese in Europe as agents of Sino-European interaction, 1650–1830

Abstract:

My doctor's thesis, *Silent travellers?: Native Chinese in Europe as agents of Sino-European interaction, 1650–1830*, focuses on how early Chinese visitors to Europe contributed to the spread of knowledge about China in the Western world, between 1650 and 1830. It is argued that the relative importance of Chinese travellers in the development of European proto-sinology has been underestimated and neglected. The history of Sino-Western encounters, and of the proto-sinological tradition of the early modern era, is largely the history of Westerners – mainly merchants and Catholic missionaries – going to China. The early Chinese who went to Europe is a chapter in the history of Sino-Western encounters that has received relatively little attention. Early Chinese visitors to reached Europe provided invaluable first-hand information that European scholars could not have accessed elsewhere. The study focuses on thirteen native Chinese individuals who visited parts of Europe that make up the modern-day countries Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Austria, and Italy. Focusing on these marginal travellers enriches our understanding of who were the agents of cross-cultural exchange, besides the well-studied philosophers and Jesuit

missionaries. This micro-historical approach serves to counterbalance the civilisational, macro-historical perspective that is common in studies of Sino-Western encounters. The thesis argues that subordinated or marginal groups could engage with and reshape Western ideas about themselves and their own cultures. They were not passive sources of knowledge, but active ones: they had agency in the processes of knowledge circulation and were subjects rather than objects. The thesis therefore identifies the period between 1650 and 1830 as a significant era for Sino-European exchange facilitated by native Chinese visitors.

Biography:

Måns Ahlstedt Åberg is a final-year PhD candidate in European Studies at the University of Hong Kong. He received his master's degree in history at Lund University, Sweden and has been a PhD candidate in Hong Kong since 2020. His main research interests are the history of European sinology and the transfer of knowledge between China and the West. His doctor's dissertation, which he is currently finalising, focuses on some of the first Chinese visitors in Europe and how they contributed to early sinology. Among his publications are: *Frivilliga rasbiologer* (Gidlunds 2022); "Amateur Eugenics: The 'Great-Mother in Dalecarlia' Genealogy Project and the Collaboration Between the Swedish Institute for Race Biology and the General Public, 1930–1935", *History of Intellectual Culture* 1 (2022), pp. 123–146; "My good friend the China-man': Afock – den förste kinesen i Sverige (1786)", *Personhistorisk tidskrift* 119 (2023) 1, pp. 1–32.

Matthew J. DOWD, *NYU Shanghai*

Abbé Larnaudie and the Multiplicity of Mission: Faith, Technology, and French Power in Nineteenth-Century Siam

Abstract:

This paper explores the career of Abbé Jean-Baptiste Larnaudie (1819–1899), a French Catholic missionary active in Siam, to reconsider the place of religious actors in the global circulation of

people, technologies, and imperial ambitions. Larnaudie's work went far beyond evangelization: he introduced photography to the Siamese court, facilitated diplomatic exchanges between Bangkok and Paris, and collaborated with French merchants. Through these entangled roles, he became an agent—often unwitting—of French soft power at the edge of empire.

Beyond reconstructing Larnaudie's activities, the paper intervenes in two historiographies that have remained surprisingly separate: the scholarship on the nineteenth-century Catholic revival in France, and the literature on Catholic overseas missions. The former has tended to emphasize religious reform and 'ultramontane' devotional networks within metropolitan France; the latter has often focused on the relationship between Catholic missionary efforts and French imperialism. Larnaudie's career invites us to bridge these two conversations. He exemplifies how the revivalist energy of post-revolutionary French Catholicism extended outward—mobilizing technological innovation, engaging with non-European societies, and producing global narratives of Catholic vitality that circulated in religious periodicals and mission reports back home.

Foregrounding Larnaudie's layered identity—as he saw himself and as others saw him—this paper highlights how religious actors shaped and were shaped by global encounters. It argues that Catholic missions were not isolated from modern processes of movement and exchange but were deeply embedded within them—facilitating the circulation of bodies, commodities, and technologies in ways that challenge familiar boundaries between religion, informal empire, and modernity.

Biography:

Matthew J. Dowd is a historian of modern Catholicism, and is currently a Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow for Global Perspectives on Society at NYU Shanghai. He specializes in the political, religious, and social history of Europe from the French

Revolution to the late twentieth century, with a particular focus on French history, Catholicism, and secularization.

His dissertation, defended at Princeton University in August 2024, explores how the globally influential French Catholic world navigated the challenges of capitalist transformation and mass politics in the nineteenth century. By questioning interpretations that portray Catholics as uniformly antagonistic to European modernity, his research highlights the internal debates among Catholics regarding their engagement with an increasingly secular society. His dissertation thus offers a fresh and dynamic view of the Catholic world at a pivotal moment of political and economic change, when the future of the Catholic world seemed uncertain.

Matthew earned a B.A. at Tufts University, and an M.A. at the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.

Albert KOZIK, *University of Warsaw*

‘A Nose Within Doors’: Travellers, Commodities, and the Sense of Smell in Eighteenth-Century European Accounts of Canton

Abstract:

The intensification of trade and cultural exchange between China and the West in the early modern period led to an unprecedented circulation of commodities, cultural narratives, and scholarly knowledge. As Canton emerged as a major trading hub, merchants amassed wealth, and their clientele expanded, facilitating increased contact between the two civilisations. While much scholarly attention has been given to these economic and scientific exchanges, less focus has been placed on how they shaped European perceptions of China’s ‘smellscapes’. Eighteenth-century travel accounts and their compilations (such as Thomas Astley’s 1747 *New General Collection of Voyages and Travels* or François de Marsy’s 1754–1778 *Histoire moderne des Chinois, des Japonais, des Indiens*, etc.) often featured highly subjective descriptions not only of fragrant flowers and aromatic

spices, but also odours deemed offensive, such as the dense smell of temple incense or the stench of market stalls. These olfactory perceptions not only shaped how China was imagined in the West, but also contributed to the cultural misunderstandings that influenced later—often hostile—mercantile and political interactions between the Qing and European empires. Drawing on the ‘sensory turn’ in recent historical studies on China (Wu Shengqing & Huang Xuelei 2023; Huang Xuelei 2023), this paper explores how olfactory stimuli travelled alongside people and commodities between China and the West in the eighteenth century. By analysing European travelogues, merchant records, and other contemporary sources, the study demonstrates that in the context of cross-cultural encounters and mediating Sino-Western relationships, sensory perceptions played a role complementary to that of the commodities themselves, changing both perceptions and behaviours of the human agents.

Biography:

Albert Kozik (孔孝文, Kong Xiaowen) is a Ph.D. candidate and research assistant at the Department of Chinese Studies of the University of Warsaw. He has graduated from the University of Oxford (M.St. in History of Art and Visual Culture) and the University of Warsaw (M.A. in History of Art; M.A. in Polish Studies; M.A. in Chinese Studies). He is the principal investigator for the research grant King of Engineers: Stanisław Leszczyński’s Theatre of Automata in the Lunéville Gardens (financed by the Polish Ministry of Science). Previously, he was a collaborator of the Religious Toleration and Peace (RETOPEA) project (funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Programme) and co-creator of the Offence module at King’s College London. He was also a 2023 Doctoral Fellow of the Boston College Ricci Institute. His research interests centre on the role of science in Sino-Western relations in the early modern period. His works have been published in *Monumenta Serica* and *The Eighteenth-Century: Theory and Interpretation*. Together with Hu Zhongyuan from KU Leuven, he is now working on a critical edition and

translation of Michał Boym's *Flora Sinensis* into English and Chinese for Brill.

Panel 5A:

Shaping Mass Culture

10:45–12:15

CPD 2.58

Chair: Iris Boyun LEI, *University of Hong Kong*

WONG Kin Lok, Nicholas, *The Chinese University of Hong Kong*
Colonial Control over Remembering: Politics and War
Commemoration in Postwar Hong Kong

Abstract:

This paper explores the political negotiation of war commemoration in postwar Hong Kong, focusing on a key commemorative site: the Cenotaph at Statue Square. After World War II, war commemoration became a widespread practice in European countries and their colonies, serving as a key tool to unite distant populations into “imagined communities.” As a British crown colony, Hong Kong adopted these rituals through Remembrance Day and Liberation Day observances.

War commemoration has always been associated with nationalism and political considerations. However, British war commemoration in Hong Kong was never part of the collective consciousness of the local Chinese community. The commemoration faced at least three challenges: the unfamiliarity of Chinese residents with the ritual style, the abstract nature of the commemoration, and uncertainty about who was being mourned and remembered. These issues worsened after World War II, when the colonial government needed to rebuild its legitimacy and colonial culture. The failure of the commemorative function

may imply that there was another rationale behind the observances.

Therefore, this paper will introduce the relationship between the nature of WWII and war commemoration in postwar Hong Kong. During the immediate postwar period (1945–1949), commemorative occasions both demonstrated and shaped the development of Sino-British relations through diplomatic protocol and narratives of WWII. After the PRC came to power, war commemoration receded due to the Cold War context and the lack of a justified war narrative that matched the government's needs.

Biography:

Wong Kin Lok Nicholas is an MPhil Student in History at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. His research interests include the political and cultural history of East Asia during the Cold War. Currently, he is completing his thesis on war commemoration practices in Hong Kong and Singapore from 1945 to 1967, exploring how authorities negotiated the legacy of WWII in the Cold War context. He welcomes conversations on the history of Hong Kong and his thesis. For inquiries or discussions, he can be contacted at nicholas.wong@link.cuhk.edu.hk.

Julia Haoran NI, *University of Kansas*

Shanghai Women and the Consumption of Western Cold Refreshments in Commercials and Photographs during the Republican Era

Abstract:

In Republican Shanghai, entertainment magazines and fashion journals featured numerous advertisements and photographs of modern Chinese women consuming Coca-Cola and Hazelwood Ice Cream, two iconic American foods of the time. Drawing on these commercials and portraits, this paper argues that American food merchants and Chinese women collaboratively shaped a new

vision of femininity in metropolitan Shanghai, which empowered women to be social, healthy, and athletic, contrary to traditional Chinese womanhood that expected them hidden from the public. Specifically, advertisements for these American refreshments depict different versions of the modern American way of life. With these refreshments, Chinese women participated in various outdoor activities and sports, spent leisure time in emerging public spaces, and socialized with male and female counterparts without compromising their sexual morality. Furthermore, the wide circulation of the photographs of Chinese women consuming Coca-Cola and ice cream indicates that these scenarios were not merely marketing tools but reflected a new reality that was truly establishing itself in the daily lives of urban Chinese women. Consuming these American refreshments became an expression of their modern identity. In these photos, urban Chinese women were portrayed as embodying a modern lifestyle, which closely mirrors the scenes presented in Coca-Cola and Hazelwood Ice Cream advertisements. Focusing on images of Chinese women and American refreshments, this paper illustrates the transnational connections between food culture and business in the globalizing China of the twentieth century. It not only highlights the fact that American enterprises leveraged the images of modern Chinese women to promote their products, but also reveals the agency of Chinese women in embracing and leading the fashion trends depicted in these advertisements.

Biography:

Julia Haoran Ni is a PhD candidate in modern Chinese history at the University of Kansas. She received her BA and MA in History at Fudan University and was a Li Foundation fellow at Needham Research Institute. Her research interests include science and technology, gender and women's studies, and food studies. The contribution of her research has been recognized by American Historical Association, Association for Asian Studies, and China Times Cultural Foundation, among others. Her peer-reviewed

publications in English appear on the *American Journal of Chinese Studies* and *Research on Women in Modern Chinese History*.

OUYANG, Jiaorui (Uranus), *University of Hong Kong*
“Export and counter-export”: the PRC-made bicycle in colonial
Hong Kong (1960-1970)

Abstract:

This paper examines the role of the bicycle as a technological artifact that facilitated cross-border interactions between mainland China and colonial Hong Kong during the 1960s and 1970s. Initially viewed as symbols of foreign imperialism, bicycles became integral to local economies in Hong Kong when affordable PRC-made Phoenix bicycles entered the market. This shift not only transformed transportation for the Chinese community but also fostered a vibrant cycling culture, allowing residents to utilize bicycles for daily deliveries and commerce.

As the Cultural Revolution intensified in mainland China, a “counter-export” phenomenon emerged, wherein residents of Hong Kong purchased these bicycles to send back to family members on the mainland. This exchange highlights the stark contrasts in material conditions and cultural identities between the two regions, with Hong Kong embracing a vibrant cycling culture while mainland China faced significant economic hardships. This paper emphasizes how this technological exchange reflects broader sociopolitical transformations and evolving notions of identity in both regions. Ultimately, the bicycle serves as a significant symbol of modernization and cross-border connectivity, underscoring the complex relationship between Hong Kong and mainland China leading up to the 1997 handover, and illustrating the intertwined histories shaped by technology and culture.

Biography:

OUYANG, Jiaorui / Uranus Ouyang is currently pursuing an MA in Hong Kong History Program at HKU. She holds a BA in Drama, Film and Television Literature from Wuhan University and an MA in Chinese Culture from HKUST. With an interdisciplinary study background, Uranus's research interests encompass the history of everyday life, Science, Technology and Society, media practice in Hong Kong. She is particularly passionate about exploring how people have already presented historical narratives through the creative arts. Uranus has hands-on experience in film production and advertisement shooting, aiming to merge her academic insights with creative storytelling.

Panel 5B:

Art and Performance on the Move

10:45–12:15

CPD 2.42

Chair: Dong HAN, *University of Warwick*

LOO Zhi En, *National University of Singapore*

The Centre of Sound: The Highland Bagpipe in Colonial India and Britain's Imperial Asia (1860s – 1947)

Abstract:

One significant musical legacy of the British Empire in South Asia is the contemporary prevalence of the three-droned Highland bagpipe in both national militaries and police forces, as well as in the civilian processional music trade. In regions in the north of the subcontinent such as Rajasthan and Garhwal, the instrument has also been incorporated into various forms of traditional music. This paper, based on a recently completed PhD thesis on the dissemination of the instrument into the colonial Indian Army, argues that these phenomena can be understood as consequences of a longer process of cultural and technological transfer

facilitated by British colonial rule on the subcontinent. During the late 19th century, this Scottish variant of a form of musical technology with distribution spanning Europe and Asia was introduced into Indian princely states and the colonial Indian Army. By the early 20th century, colonial India was Asia's key centre for the recruitment, training and global deployment of pipers. Indian Army pipers were deployed to colonial garrisons and warzones across the globe. Some of these pipers also became composers for the instrument. Colonial India itself became a base for the manufacture of the instrument, with pipemakers in the city of Sialkot in Punjab using local sheesham wood to produce a cheaper product that arguably made the instrument more accessible to civilian and military customers across colonial India and facilitating its further diffusion across the subcontinent. Ultimately, a more complete understanding of the global history of the Highland bagpipe requires going beyond imagining the instrument as merely a Scottish national icon; the three-droned instrument was a piece of musical technology that was disseminated globally through imperial networks and which local actors could appropriate for their own uses.

Biography:

LOO Zhi En is a part-time lecturer in the Department of History at the National University of Singapore (NUS) with research interests in cultural history, the history of the Indian Army, the imperial dimensions of Scottish history and the history of musical instruments. He has recently completed and defended his thesis entitled "Empire's Embellishments: The Highland Bagpipe in the Indian Army and the Global British Empire (c. 1860-1947)". The thesis used the pipe bands of the pre-1947 Indian Army as case studies to explore the imperially mediated cultural encounters and transfers through which the Scottish Highland bagpipe and its associated performance practices were disseminated and received in the Asian half of the British imperial world from the second half of the 19th century up to 1947. Zhi En is also a musician performing mainly on the Scottish smallpipes, though he also

plays the border pipes, Highland bagpipes and tin whistle. In recent years, he has performed with the groups *Traditionally Speaking*, *Singapore Trad Collective*, *Open Score Project*, *Red Dot Baroque*, as well as for the dance company *Miao Dance*, all of which are based in Singapore.

Sherry Xuezi XU, *University of Cambridge*

Crossing-Eurasian Courtesan: *La Traviata* and Operatic Circulations in Colonial Shanghai

Abstract:

Opera is by no means a static artifact rooted solely in its Western European birthplace; rather, it has evolved into a distinctive global network of performance and production throughout history – a music-making process, a market-driven commodity, and a site for power negotiation. One of its distinct transregional trajectories was from Western Europe to East Asia, largely driven by touring opera troupes, including impresarios and singers – unique border-crossing groups that boomed in the nineteenth century. Focusing on Shanghai’s opera scene, this paper examines the transitory performance circuits established by itinerant companies during the city’s treaty-port era – the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – when foreign concessions engulfed the city, Western and Chinese operatic forms intersected, and foreign and local audiences converged. This socio-historical milieu further complicates the performances given by touring opera companies, not merely as an isolated cultural phenomenon, but as an ineluctable infiltration into local cultural practices, epitomizing the power dynamics between Western imperial powers and Chinese nationalism.

To illustrate, I take the case of Verdi’s opera *La Traviata*, a staple of the repertoire that offers insights into the broader operatic ecology of Shanghai. I show its trajectory from its initial appearance in concert form at horse racing events, performed by the band of the Shanghai Municipal Council, to full stagings by

two touring opera troupes – Augusto Cagli’s Royal Italian Opera Company in the 1880s and Adolfo Carpi’s Grand Opera Company in the 1910s and 1920s – held at the Lyceum Theatre, the first Western-style theatre in the city. I also demonstrate how the same story became entangled in the Chinese operatic narrative through the Peking opera *Xin Cha Hua* (1909), as well as the reform of Shanghai’s Peking opera theatres under the influence of the Lyceum Theatre. This reciprocal perspective sheds new light on Shanghai’s lesser-known operatic history.

Biography:

Sherry Xuezi Xu is a musicologist whose research focuses on the music history of 18th- and 19th-century Italian opera, contemporary European opera, and traditional Chinese operas. She is interested in how opera – both as a musical work and a historical event – mediates cultural history in relation to broader socio-political issues, including gender, (post)colonialism, and intercultural exchange. Her previous projects have explored British women’s history, celebrity culture, and proto-feminism in the late 18th and early 19th centuries through the lens of London’s Italian opera production and its female singers. She has also published research in Chinese on Peking, Kunqu, and Yue opera, examining both their historical development and musical structures. Xu received an MPhil in Music from the University of Cambridge and a BA in Musicology from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, with a minor in English from Shanghai Jiao Tong University. A recipient of the Berkeley Fellowship and Princeton’s Frank E. Taplin fellowship in music (declined), she will pursue her PhD in historical musicology at the University of California, Berkeley. In 2024, her research on a contemporary opera received a prize from the Royal Musical Association.

Sylvia Tongyan QIU, *University of California, Los Angeles*
Shipped, Uprooted, and Recycled: Bejewelled Potted Landscapes
and Clockwork Automata at the Eighteenth-Century Qing Court

Abstract:

The eighteenth-century Qing court was a site of dynamic material exchange, where imported objects and raw materials were dismantled, repurposed, and reintegrated into new artistic forms. This paper examines two interconnected categories of objects—bejewelled potted landscapes (*baoshi penjing* 寶石盆景) and clockwork automata (*zimingzhong* 自鳴鐘)—tracing how gemstones, glass, and precious metals moved in and out of the Qing court and circulated within and beyond the boundaries of the Qing Empire.

While bejewelled potted landscapes sought to transcend the ephemerality of living plants by creating ‘eternal’ microcosms of nature, the fragility of their construction necessitated constant intervention and care. Similarly, clockwork automata made in different parts of Europe, in Canton, and at the Imperial Workshop often underwent modification and repair as they were transported between the Imperial Palace, Rehe, and Yuanmingyuan. Beyond maintenance, the Qianlong Emperor actively ordered rework on potted landscapes and clocks to adjust to his taste. Previous scholarship has focused on their roles as diplomatic gifts, luxury commodities, and marvels of mechanical ingenuity, but little attention has been paid to their im/material afterlives.

Analysing the Imperial Workshop records, discussions from European sources, and comparing them with extant objects, this paper positions these acts of reassembly and alteration within the global networks of trade, material understandings, and technological experimentation in the 18th century. Rather than treating bejewelled potted landscapes as merely symbolic, auspicious displays unique to the Qing court and clockwork automata as predominantly imported products, this paper demonstrates the interactions and interdependency between the two. It aims to demonstrate the composite nature of objects made in the “Palace Machine”—where the boundaries between foreign

and domestic goods, old and new technologies, exotic and familiar materials were constantly being redefined.

Biography:

Sylvia Tongyan Qiu 邱童颜 is a second-year Ph.D. student in Art History at UCLA. Her research explores the intersections of early modern globalization and the visual and material culture of the Qing court. Her dissertation examines the relationship between image-making and diplomacy at EurAsian courts between the 17th and 18th centuries, specifically, the trans-medial construction of European visions of the Qing Empire through illustrated ambassadorial accounts. Her research interests also include the consumption of gemstones and natural products in EurAsian courts. She received her MA in Art History from UCLA and BA in History of Art from University College London. Her research has been supported by UCLA Center for 17th- and 18th-Century Studies, and the Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History.

Panel 6A:

Migration and Surveillance

2:00–3:30

CPD 2.58

Chair: LE Ha Thu Oanh Alicia, *University of Hong Kong*

LIEW Zhen Hao, *London School of Economics and Political Science*
Tracking Absences: Visual Technologies and Forced Mobilities in
Colonial Maritime Southeast Asia

Abstract:

In narratives on Chinese overseas migration between China and Southeast Asia, a common assumption of the process relates to the voluntary nature of the ‘returning’ Chinese diaspora to their homelands in China, after what was envisaged as a temporary stint

abroad. Focusing on the histories of Chinese populations in both the British and Dutch colonial spheres after the turn of the twentieth century, this paper reinstates the role of coercion in this historical process and examines the significance of forced mobilities in maritime Southeast Asia's colonial history. Colonial regimes compelled an array of historical Chinese actors, including coolies, vagrants and banishees, to leave the region, often against their will. They achieved this via the criminalization of such populations to secure their expulsion. In the aftermath of enacting these forced mobilities, however, it prompted new administrative concerns and anxieties for the authorities.

Both British and Dutch colonial actors invested in newly emergent visual technologies to identify the criminalised. The deployment of dactylography was not the product of the modern state's predilection in rendering the colonised population legible. It instead underscored the centrality of the punitive policy of banishment for colonial control over both labour and society. By primarily examining the emergence and subsequent development of associated infrastructures to administer this transnational mobility, this paper sketches the debates and efforts in rendering the 'inscrutable' colonised population identifiable. It argues that the institution of fingerprinting did not reflect the unilateral expansion of colonial reach, as authorities recognised its limitations from the beginning. Confidence in the technology resulted in the expansion of its application beyond criminal identification. Focusing on the registration of vagrancy, it demonstrates that surveillance cannot be explained solely by its relationship with crime or the state's desire to increase its power.

Biography:

Liew Zhen Hao is a third year PhD candidate at the Department of International History, London School of Economics. His current research on British and Dutch empires in twentieth-century Southeast Asia examines the interrelation between colonialism and migration, and, more broadly, mobility.

Specifically, it asks how colonial governance of Chinese mobilities co-constituted both colonial power and Chinese overseas migratory experiences. Expanding beyond existing narratives of migration, his research also highlights both the significance of immobility and of the local in this history. Taking a spatial approach, he examines how colonial actors enact enclosure and confinement to immobilise colonial labour. This extends the study of immobilities beyond traditional sites of state punishment to locate similar historical processes within the history of migration control and persistence of coerced labour relations in modern colonial capitalist regimes. He also seeks to problematise assumed values and notions related to migration and mobility by focusing on forced or punitive mobilities. By examining the historical racialisation of these forced mobilities, his research asks how the punitive regime was simultaneously shaped by and produced the colonial construction of the Chinese as a security threat in the prewar period.

Henry Tin Heng CHU, *University of British Columbia*
“India’s Slavery” in Colonial Hong Kong: The *Komagata Maru*
Voyage and Punjabi Migrants in Hong Kong

Abstract:

In April 1914, the ship *Komagata Maru*, chartered by Gurdit Singh and with over a hundred Punjabi passengers onboard, set sail from British Hong Kong to embark on a voyage that would mark an enduring chapter in the history of the British Empire. However, the famous voyage has predominantly been studied and memorialized in Canadian, Indian, Punjabi, or Sikh contexts, and scholars and the public tend to overlook its journey and significance in East and Southeast Asia, including Hong Kong. In this paper, I invoke the voyage as a means to situate Hong Kong in its broader imperial and migratory contexts while shedding light on its Punjabi and South Asian communities, which have been sidelined in mainstream narratives on Hong Kong’s history. The *Komagata Maru* voyage, among many other transoceanic paths

trodden by various migrants, shows how Hong Kong was not only a starting point but also, borrowing Elizabeth Sinn's phrase, an "in-between place" for Punjabi migrants, including Sikh policemen who worked for the British. Sikh participation in British colonial disciplined forces in Hong Kong, however, was a crucial site in the making of the colonial dehumanizing logic that Gurdit Singh, the charterer of *Komagata Maru*, characterized as "India's slavery abroad." Such colonial logic and its interactions with Han ethnocentrism contributed to the racialization and essentialization of Hong Kong South Asians as a whole in scholarship and public discourse through the exotic, visible, and compressed caricature of the martial Sikh body. Through a transregional and critical racial lens, I argue how the *Komagata Maru* voyage demonstrates the mobility, resistance, and fluidity of Punjabi migrants in Hong Kong, thus offering an avenue for historians to engage with the historical subjectivities of Hong Kong South Asians while unsettling and subverting the essentializing narratives that have obscured these subjectivities.

Biography:

Henry Tin Heng CHU is a history master's student at the University of British Columbia. He took a double major in Interdisciplinary Studies and History at the University of Hong Kong and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences (Interdisciplinary Studies) degree. His primary research focus is the history of Hong Kong South Asians, and he is particularly interested in themes like migration, citizenship, and race-making. His master's thesis, supervised by Dr. Leo Shin, will be about the demands for British citizenship from Hong Kong South Asian elites in the years leading up to the Handover and the political, legal, and social discourses surrounding them.

Qingyun ZHAO, *University of Hong Kong*
Kim, Abramov and the Status of Foreign Immigrants in Modern
China

Abstract:

In October 1929, Kim Jeol, a Korean immigrant, automatically acquired Chinese citizenship due to the naturalization of his father. Four years later, in November 1933, when the Japanese consul-general in Shanghai detained him, Chinese citizens and organisations in the city united to petition on his behalf, and the municipal and central governments intervened to demand his release. Kim's case stands in contrast with the fate of A. Abramov and his compatriots. The case of the three refugees from the former Russian Empire similarly reached local and state authorities, but yielded no positive result. Having been sentenced for a crime against national security by the Higher Court of Henan in November 1936, the men were denied of their request to be removed from surveillance and allowed to move in September 1939 by the ultimate decision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, despite the declaration by the Supreme Court in August 1937 that they were innocent.

The differences between the two cases raise a question on the status of immigrants, which remains underexplored as does the history of immigration affairs in modern China in general. It begins with how successive governments had set the legal status of aliens acquiring citizenship, and sought to redefine that of others – as immigrants under Chinese jurisdiction, and not mere foreigners sheltered from it by the treaties. Using the cases of Kim and Abramov, it explores factors influencing the status of immigrants in practice and formulates an analytical framework in which the significance of the person to China took priority, their citizenship ranked second in importance, and individual circumstances mattered least. Examining laws, regulations and cases, this research shows how the control of aliens was far from impersonal or routine, but involved the calculation of each person's relative worth as a potential citizen of China.

Biography:

Qingyun Zhao is a PhD candidate at the University of Hong Kong. She holds a BA(Hons) from the University of Nottingham Ningbo China and a MSt from the University of Oxford. She is a historian of modern China. Her primary areas of research include emotions and immigration. Her thesis, “Public Voices, Private Noises: An Affective History of Unemployment, 1928–1937,” integrates immigrants into the regular history of China. Qingyun is the author of two journal articles on immigration affairs, titling respectively “Russian Émigrés in Chinese Eyes, 1920s–1940s” (2024) and “From Foreigners to Citizens: Naturalization in Nationalist China, June 1928–July 1949” (forthcoming).

Panel 6B:

Nation, Culture, and Tradition in the Making of Modern Spaces

2:00–3:30

CPD 2.42

Chair: Nicole VAUGHAN, *University of Hong Kong*

PAN Xuyan, *Lingnan University*

Summer Agency: Transnational Enterprises and the Nationalization of China’s Summer Resorts, 1890–1928

Abstract:

The modern concept of summering—escaping to high-altitude or coastal retreats for health and leisure—was deeply embedded in the processes of colonization and globalization in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Across Asia, foreign administrators, military officers, and missionaries established hill stations modeled on European practices, blending medical, administrative, and recreational functions. In China, where Western missionaries were permitted to purchase land and construct buildings, they became pioneers of summer resorts, selecting geographically

advantageous locations along the East Coast. Mokanshan in Zhejiang Province emerged as a prime example, shaped by the transnational circulation of climatic knowledge, architectural technologies, financial instruments, and governance strategies.

Unlike colonial hill stations solely serving imperial administrators, Mokanshan's missionary-driven resort was structured through a corporate system, leveraging debentures and stock offerings to attract investment from Shanghai's foreign and Chinese elites. Missionary entrepreneurs employed depoliticization strategies, maintaining an open stance toward both Chinese and foreign authorities to secure operational autonomy. The high volume of property transactions within Mokanshan underscores not only its commercial success but also deeper systemic questions regarding the economic and institutional mechanisms behind modern summer resorts, beyond consumer culture.

However, the rise of Chinese nationalism in the early 20th century disrupted this transnational model. Under mounting political pressure, missionary enterprises relinquished control, selling the property to the Nationalist government in 1928. This marked a decade-long process of nationalization, monopolization, and politicization, transforming Mokanshan from an international retreat to a nationalist space. This study positions Mokanshan as both a local adaptation of foreign summering culture and a microcosm of China's transition from an internationalized to a nationalized modernity, offering new perspectives on the trajectory of Chinese modernization and sovereignty.

Biography:

PAN Xuyan holds a B.A. and M.Phil. in History from Lingnan University. Her research focuses on leisure, summer resorts, and tourism in modern China, with particular attention to the spatial politics of mountain retreats and the cultural transformation of transnational sites. She is especially interested in how practices of

travel, recreation, and health intersect with statecraft, identity, and modernization during the late Qing and Republican periods.

LEUNG, Edward Yee Wah, *Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA)*

Resilient Rituals – Traditional Chinese Architectural Spaces in Canada

Abstract:

The unique cross-cultural heritage of Overseas Chinese in the fields of art, literature, cuisine, and handicrafts is well studied and acknowledged. However, in discussing traditional Chinese architectures in Chinatowns abroad, general literature often pay attention to the superficial and decorative features of cultural tourism interests, but seldom explore the underlying Chinese traditional spatial concepts, which would be the foundation of Chinese heritage. This paper looks at the case of Canada, since it was one of the earliest Western countries that Chinese came in 19th century to set up Chinatowns. They mainly came from villages and towns of China's south-east coasts (known as Lingnan Region). The dialect groups of Cantonese, Hakka, and Hokkien, retain their respective customs and rituals, that hold the communities together even up to today. Behind the generally Western looking townhouses in Chinatowns of Canada, the Chinese temples, ancestral halls, guildhalls, and community centres they set up between the 19th and early 20th century embody spatial and configurational traditional design characters representative of the resilient hereditary ideals of the respective clans and home-village groups. By studying the architectural principles of these community ritual spaces in Chinatowns of Toronto, Vancouver and Victoria, this article argues that the traditional Lingnan heritage not only runs deep amongst Overseas Chinese, but is also resilient amidst the modern world, which can be revealed in the space-design and craftsmanship used.

Biography:

Mr Edward LEUNG is a practicing architect and heritage conservation professional. His well-known heritage conservation projects include the multi-award winning adaptive reuse of Tong Lau in Wan Chai into art and community centre, and adapting Former Banque de l'Indochine, in Shamian Island of Guangzhou into an Art School. His other advisory roles on heritage projects include Crown Wine Cellar and Museum of Medical Science in Hong Kong, and Cantonese Opera Art Museum of Guangzhou. He was Chair of Heritage and Conservation Committee of the Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA) (2017-19). He teaches in universities and colleagues on heritage conservation and on Chinese architecture. His academic research focuses on Chinese-mix-Western Architectures in transforming urban context. His paper "Accidental Marriage: Chinese Roofs on Early Colonial Architectures of Hong Kong" attained the Outstanding Presentation Award in UIA Conference of Seoul in 2017.

Panel 7:

Medicine and Sanitary Regimes

3:45–5:15

CPD 2.58

Chair: Rebecca Si-ning WANG, *University of Hong Kong*

Linquan MA, *King's College London, University of Hong Kong*

Intervention in Tropical Medicine: Traditional Chinese Medicine, Ivan Pavlov and Tropical Diseases in Communist China before the Great Leap Forward

Abstract:

This paper looks at how tropical medicine, which originated internationally and was in the hands of foreign experts and Chinese doctors with backgrounds of studying abroad, has encountered Traditional Chinese Medicine through the government's intervention in Communist China. During the

Great Leap Forward, many ‘medical innovations’ emerged rapidly, explored the use of TCM treating schistosomiasis, filariasis, kala-azar, and other diseases that could be categorised as tropical diseases. There is an obvious cause for this phenomenon, as the government promoted the unification of ‘Chinese’ and ‘Western’ medicine, so it seems logical that TCM and tropical medicine cooperate when the government also made the eradication of several tropical diseases a goal in the process of building and reinforcing its national public health system. By analysing a range of sources, this paper seeks to re-examine the detailed processes by which ‘Chinese’ TCM and ‘imported’ tropical medicine communicated in the 1950s, before the effects of the Great Leap Forward swept across the country. The paper aims to display that in addition to the undoubted influence of the government, some groups such as disease experts also played an important role. At the same time, from the point of view of expertise, TCM was hardly able to enter dialogues with tropical medicine on tropical diseases until years after the establishment of the People’s Republic of China. Some of the theories of Nobel Prize winner Ivan Pavlov (after being somewhat misinterpreted and overextended) played an important role in the government’s intervention in eliminating the borders between TCM and ‘Western’ medicine on the topic of tropical diseases. This paper argues that the transnational encounter of TCM and tropical medicine is a multi-party process and did not happen overnight, even at the behest and strong intervention of the government.

Biography:

Linquan Ma is currently a PhD student in History at the University of Hong Kong and King’s College London (Joint PhD programme). His doctoral research looks at the interaction between the Chinese government and medical experts when the country faced tropical disease threats in the post-1949 period. Before joining HKU and KCL, he obtained an MPhil in World History degree at the University of Cambridge and a BA in Modern History and Politics at the University of Essex. He has

presented his works at the Joint East Asian Studies Conference at Central Lancashire University in June 2024.

Sanford MENSAH, *Lingnan University*

British Colonial Environmental Policies on Waste Management in the Eastern Province of the Gold Coast (Ghana), 1874 – 1957

Abstract:

This paper examines the waste management and sanitation policies of the British in the Eastern Province between 1874 and 1957. On July 24, 1874, the British declared a formal colonial rule over the Gold Coast and assumed the power and authority to make laws and regulations. The British had several coastal towns to address their poor sanitary state. In 1871, F. Fitzgerald described Cape Coast as “one vast public privy and dunghill.” And in 1872, governor Pope Hennessy described the Gold Coast as “the most filthy and apparently neglected place he had ever seen under anything like a civilised government.” Despite this awareness, the colonial office was hesitant to commit resources. This paper using a qualitative evaluation of archival documents revealed that, it took the efforts of some journalists of the African Times and petition from the colonial officials before the first public health ordinance, empowering the governor and the colonial surveyor to ensure the clearing and draining of streets was passed in 1878. The colonial government further provided sanitary amenities such as public latrines, public dustbins, incinerators and portable water. These facilities, however, were inadequate and were mainly situated in towns where the British officials resided. It is based on this that I argue that colonial efforts in mitigating the sanitation and waste management menace in the Eastern Province of the Gold Coast were primarily designed by the colonial office to protect the interest of the British officials, rather than improving the insanitary conditions for the indigenous population.

The history of colonial policies on sanitation in Africa is vital but has been a neglected field of enquiry in African historiography. This paper builds on the few existing works and contributes to the broader argument that the failure of British colonial sanitation policies significantly contributes to the current waste management challenges in the former British West African colonies.

Biography:

Sanford MENSAH is a Year 1 PhD student at the Department of History, Lingnan University. He is a recipient of the 2024/2025 Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme (HKPFS) Awards, and he is working under Prof. HAMPTON Mark Andrew (Chief Supervisor) and Prof. ZHANG Lei (Co-Supervisor). Prior to joining Lingnan University, Sanford worked as a Teaching Assistant at the Department of History and Diplomacy, University of Cape Coast, Ghana, where he received both his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees in History. Sanford does research on (African) Environmental History with interest in British Colonial Environmental Policies, Sanitation and Waste Management Policies and Imperialism.

Dong HAN, *University of Warwick* and Xianglong ZHU, *University of Cambridge*

Reinventing Dangshen: State Power and Herb Consumption from Late Imperial to Communist China

Abstract:

Based on the theory of *Yaoshi tongyuan* (lit. food and medicine have the same origin), dangshen (*Codonopsis pilosula*, belonging to the Campanulaceae family) is widely used in contemporary dietary supplements and food recipes within Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). However, the record of this herb in *materia medica* can only be traced back to the mid-seventeenth century, when the Qing state monopolised the more well-known and valuable herb ginseng (*Panax ginseng*, belonging to the Araliaceae

family). While previous research has suggested dangshen's initial adoption as a widespread ginseng alternative during the early Qing, its subsequent reinvention as a food ingredient for *Yangsheng* (nourishing life) remains underexplored.

The culinary adoption of dangshen illustrates the resistance against state power and the market adaptation by medical practitioners and merchants from late imperial to communist China. Drawing from Chinese *materia medica*, archives, and other publications, this research reveals that dangshen's culinary use was pioneered in the TCM revival movement of the Republican period, and later cemented as standard knowledge in post-Mao China. It argues that, while the state attempted to reshape the knowledge of dangshen for political and ideological purposes, medical practitioners and merchants adeptly adapted their commercial strategies, integrating dangshen into consumers' daily lives. This dynamic interplay introduces a novel perspective on China's dietary and consumer culture, highlighting the intricate balance between state power and herb consumption.

Biographies:

Dong HAN, also known as Tsi Cong, holds a PhD in Art History from the University of Warwick, supported by a departmental bursary. He earned his BA from the China Central Academy of Fine Arts and his MLitt from the University of St Andrews. His research explores intersections between image and knowledge, global visual culture, and Sino-European exchange. He has published on early modern book history, natural history imagery, Jesuit visual culture, and contemporary Chinese art, and has presented at major conferences including RSA, BACS, and the 35th CIHA Congress. Beyond academia, he reaches wider audiences as a social media content creator, sharing lectures and insights on cultural history.

Xianglong ZHU earned his first master's degree in History and Philosophy of Science at UCL, and is currently pursuing a second

in the same field at the University of Cambridge. His research focuses on the history of science, technology, and medicine in global East Asia, with particular interest in the transnational history of technology in modern China during the Second World War. He has presented his work at conferences of the American Association for the History of Medicine and the Society for the History of Technology.

Closing Remarks

5:15–5:30

CPD 2.58

Oscar SANCHEZ-SIBONY, *University of Hong Kong*

Department of History

Department Chair

Postgraduate Coordinator

Acknowledgments

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

FANG Yi
Nicole VAUGHAN
Iris Boyun LEI
LE Ha Thu Oanh Alicia
Linqun MA

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

Harry YEUNG

PANEL CHAIRS

WU Jiarui
PENG Jin
OUYANG Jiaorui (Uranus)
Dong HAN
Rebecca Si-ning WANG



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
School of Humanities · The University of Hong Kong



shs.history.hku.hk

hkuhistorysymposium@gmail.com

