DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS[*]

Hsieh, Mei-Yu. Ph.D. Stanford University, 2011.
Viewing the Han Empire from the Edge.

This dissertation examines in the continental context the building and maintenance of the Han state, which existed in the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers regions roughly from the second century B.C.E. to the second century C.E. It surveys the trajectory that transformed the Han state from a regional polity confined to the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers regions to a trans-regional superpower, exerting its influence across East Eurasia. I focus specifically on the interstate interaction between the Yellow River region (the Han), on the steppe (the Xiongnu), and in the Tarim Basin (multiple oasis-states) from the beginning of the second century B.C.E. to the early first century C.E. as my case study. Making use of both transmitted and excavated Han texts, I demonstrate that two major mechanisms facilitated the transformative process of the Han state in the political landscape of East Eurasia. One was horizontal kin ties between the Han emperor and peer rulers. The other was the vertically-structured imperial bureaucracy that organized communities in the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers regions for imperial power-building. In particular, the imperial bureaucracy evolved into the nodal mechanism to sustain imperial initiatives. On the one hand, it vertically incorporated into its writing-based system individuals of diverse social, cultural, and geographic backgrounds in the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers regions as the support base of the Han emperor. On the other hand, it horizontally facilitated the emperor's kinship-based alliance network across East Eurasia. This bureaucratic mechanism became the backbone that continued to weave together complex communities in the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers regions regardless of the rise and fall of ruling houses.

Carlson, Jack. Ph.D. University of Oxford, 2015.
Images, Objects and Imperial Power in the Roman and Qin-Han Empires.

How and why was imperial power made visually and physically manifest in two similar, contemporaneous megastates: the Roman Principate and Qin-Han China? Framing the Chinese and Roman material within such a question breaks it free from the web of expectations and

assumptions in which conventional scholarship almost always situates it. It also builds upon the limited but promising work recently undertaken to study these two empires together in a comparative context. The purpose of this thesis is not to discover similarities and differences for their own sake, but, by discovering similarities and differences, to learn about the nature of imperial authority and prestige in each state. The comparative method compels us to appreciate the contingent—and sometimes frankly curious—nature of visual and artefactual phenomena that have traditionally been taken for granted; and it both challenges and empowers us to access higher tier explanations and narratives. Roman expressions of power in visual terms are more public, more historical-biographical, and more political, while Qin-Han images and objects related to imperial authority are generally more private, generic, and ritual in their nature. The Roman material emphasizes the notional complicity of large groups of people—the imperial subjects who viewed, crafted, and often commissioned these works—in maintaining and defining the emperor's power. If the Han emperor's power was the product of complicity, it was the complicity of a small group of family members and courtiers—and of Heaven. These contrasting sets of power relationships connect to a concerted thematic focus, in the case of Rome, on the individual of the princeps, that is, the individual personage and particular achievements—especially military achievements—of the emperor. This focus is almost always taken for granted in Roman studies, but contrasts profoundly with the thematic disposition of Han artefacts of power. These reflect a concentrated disinterest in imperial personality altogether, emphasizing instead the imperial position, that is, both the office of emperor and a cosmic centrality. While this thesis reveals some arresting contrasts, it also harnesses the dichotomous orientations of Roman and Chinese archaeology to reveal that the conventional understanding of much of this material can be misleading or problematic. Many of the differences in the ways such images are usually interpreted have as much to do with the idiosyncrasies and path dependency of two fields—in short as much to do with the modern viewer—as they do with the images themselves and the traditions that produced them.

Grebnev, Yegor. Ph.D. University of Oxford, 2016.
The Core Chapters of the Yi Zhou shu.

In this thesis, I discuss a group of compositionally related "core" chapters within the *Yi Zhou shu*, a collection of fifty-nine texts from ancient China that has received very limited attention in scholarship. The texts in this collection are difficult to read and interpret because of their poor preservation and the lack of concise commentaries.

I develop a methodological strategy for the identification of philologically related texts within the collection, which allows me to single out a group of texts related by compositional structures, rhetorical patterns, and characteristic formulaic expressions. I call such chapters "kingly consultations," considering that most of such texts are presented as speeches involving sage rulers of the Western Zhou (mid-eleventh century–771 B.C.E.), in which they share the fundamental wisdoms of kingship. I argue that these texts are remnants of an important ritualized textual practice, which has left traces not only in the *Yi Zhou shu*, but also in other collections, such as the *Liu tao* (Six Bow Cases), which is commonly classified among "military" texts.

I reconstruct elements of the socio-political context of the kingly consultations using comparative insight. I examine the numerical lists used for systematization of knowledge against similar lists in the Pāli canon. I also explain the significance of the expressions that emphasize the secretive transmission of texts against better-known esoteric textual communities in China and Japan. Such comparison allows me to preliminarily identify the communities behind the kingly consultations as based on strict knowledge-based hierarchy, but prone to segmentation. Finally, I position the kingly consultations within the broader context of the practice of treasure texts. This practice is an important development in ancient China that led to the emergence of a new type of textual authority by "detaching" earlier epigraphic texts from their precious material carriers and introducing them into the novel environment of manuscript culture.

Joseph, Veronica Adelle. Ph.D. Boston University, 2016.
A Bioarchaeological Analysis of the Effects of the Xiongnu Empire on the Physical Health of Nomadic Groups in Iron Age Mongolia. Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI. (Publication No. 10015273.)

The Xiongnu Empire (c. 200 B.C.E.–100 C.E.) was the first instance of imperial-level organization by nomadic groups of the Mongolian steppe. Over a century of historical and archaeological research has produced a large body of scholarship on the political, military, and socio-cultural structures of Xiongnu society. This study adds to the growing body of recent bioarchaeological research by using multiple lines of evidence to address the impacts of empire formation on the physical health of those who lived under the influence of Xiongnu rule.

Models of Xiongnu empire formation posit stable access to Chinese agricultural goods and reduction in violent conflict as major motivating factors in establishing imperial-level organization among Mongolian nomadic groups. By gathering data from the skeletal remains of 349

individuals from 27 archaeological sites and analyzing the frequency of 10 dietary and health indicators, this study addresses these claims. The Xiongnu imperial expansion and administration resulted in the movement and/or displacement of nomadic groups, consequences that are documented in Chinese historical texts, but its impact on population structure is poorly understood. Craniometric data collected from this skeletal sample were used to conduct a model-bound biological distance analysis and fit to an unbiased relationship matrix to determine the amount of intra- and inter-group variation, and estimate the biological distance between different geographic and temporal groups.

This skeletal sample includes individuals from nineteen Xiongnu-period sites located across the region under Xiongnu imperial control. Individuals from eight Bronze Age sites in Mongolia were included to establish pre-Xiongnu health status. One agricultural site within the Han empire, contemporaneous with the Xiongnu, was included for comparison.

The results of this study indicate that Xiongnu motivations for creating a nomadic empire were considerably more complex than current models suggest. Although historical texts document that the Xiongnu received agricultural products as tribute from China, dietary markers indicate the Xiongnu diet was more similar to that of their Bronze Age predecessors than to their agricultural Han neighbors. The movement of people across the Mongolian steppe during the Xiongnu period created a more phenotypically homogeneous population structure than that of previous Bronze Age groups.

Jaffe, Yitzchak. Ph.D. Harvard University, 2016.
The Continued Creation of Communities of Practice—Finding Variation in the Western Zhou Expansion (1046–771 BCE).

This work explores the question of when and how China became Chinese by studying state sponsored colonial expansion and intercultural interactions during the Western Zhou period (1046–771 B.C.E.). Because Confucius and his followers considered this period the golden age of civilization, scholars have traditionally paid little attention to existing ethnic and cultural diversity and created the illusion that Chinese culture, in Han style, already existed at this early date. However, my investigation of everyday activities, food preparation, and ritual events surrounding mortuary customs, highlights the complex relationship between the Zhou and the people they encountered.

Following their conquest of the Shang polity in the middle of the eleventh century B.C.E., the Zhou began a swift campaign of colonization

during which members of the royal family were sent to defend and expand strategic zones around the new realm. The traditional narrative—one that focuses on the formation of the later unified Chinese Empire and civilization—sees the Zhou as those who, through military expansion and conquest, successfully Sinicized and acculturated the peoples that would make up the Chinese world.

Yet this narrative overemphasizes the homogeneity of Zhou identity and fails to account for the multifaceted nature of Chinese culture and origins. These interpretations have relied heavily on later historical texts and information gleaned from inscriptions of bronze ritual vessels, themselves biased toward the Zhou elite world view, while archaeology has played a second fiddle to historical reconstructions.

This dissertation compared separate regions of the Zhou expansion: Gansu in the west, Shandong peninsula in the east, and the Shanxi plains to the north of the Central Plains. Cemeteries were examined to investigate the mortuary customs of local people, and ceramic vessels to study culinary traditions, in an effort to show how everyday and ritual-specific practices were influenced by the Zhou. Culinary research involved the detailed study and user analysis of freshly excavated ceramic assemblages to understand community-specific cooking and serving practices. Ceramic assemblages from four pre-Zhou and Zhou sites in Shandong province were compared to sites in the core zone of the Zhou polity to assess the impact of the Zhou arrival. My analysis shows that each of the four sites observed its own community-specific culinary and mortuary traditions: an increase in cooking vessel size at some, indicating a shift to larger eating parties, while at others, the way food was cooked—from a mix of roasting and braising cooking modes to a focus on boiling and stewing. In Gansu the Zhou had little impact on the multitude of existing community-specific mortuary practices and remained separate from the local population, while in the Beijing area the Zhou invaders played down their military identity and allowed local groups to participate in their mortuary practices.

Consequently, my study finds that the Zhou expansion did not result in the homogenization of the ancient cultural landscape, but instead that the Zhou influence had unequal results: from acceptance to rejection and mostly to its reorganization to suit local needs and agendas. The Zhou influence was regional in scope but local in outcome. In effect these interactions created various new forms of localized social identities across North China, which differ profoundly from the homogeneous Zhou elite culture depicted in the canonical histories.

Tang, Qiaomei. Ph.D. Harvard University, 2016.
Divorce and the Divorced Woman in Early Medieval China
(First through Sixth Century).

This dissertation concerns cultural discourses surrounding divorce in early medieval China. Contrary to popular images of women bound by Neo-Confucian ideals of the late imperial period, women in early medieval China had a remarkable amount of agency in matters concerning marriage and divorce. The study provides a cultural history of divorce during this period as well as a literary study of the figure of the divorced woman in early medieval literature. A comparison between the rites, norms, and regulations prescribed for women in ritual classics and women's lived experiences from the early medieval period reveals significant discrepancies. Normative prescriptions were generally not followed by women of this period and women generally enjoyed a more relaxed social and familial environment than their late imperial counterparts. An examination of divorce cases from the period reveals that neither the Seven Conditions (*qichu* 七出) nor the Three Prohibitions (*sanbuqu* 三不去) for divorce were strictly adhered to when a marriage was annulled. Divorce occurred across socio-economic classes and was initiated by both men and women for a variety of reasons. These literary and historical sources allow me to contend that divorce was not regarded as a social taboo in early medieval China. The complex social and political environment of the early medieval period gave rise to some ritual deviations and anomalies, such as the two-principal-wives (*liangdi* 兩嫡) phenomenon. This phenomenon raised questions concerning marital status and divorce proceedings. One sixth-century two principal-wives case reveals that during the long period of division between north and south, the contestation between wives for principal-wife-status mirrored the contention for cultural supremacy and political legitimacy between the northern and southern elite. In this case, divorce for one of the women did occur. Historians tended to describe such divorced women in a negative light, serving only to relate the story of the men who divorced them. Literary works from the period reveal that divorced women were not only viewed in relation to their ex-husbands. Instead, women voiced their identities, statuses, and circumstances with a range of emotive descriptions. Through exploring poetic, historical, and epigraphic works from early medieval China, this study sheds light on the dynamics of gender, marriage, regional differences, and literary genres during a formative and literarily-prolific period of China's past.

Robinson, Rebecca. Ph.D. McGill University, 2016.
Cult and Calendars in the Ancient Empires of Qin, Han, and Rome.

Cult and Calendars in the Ancient Empires of Qin, Han, and Rome is a comparison of reforms made to imperial cult and calendar during the formative years of empire. As distinct from ruler cult, I define imperial cult as cult activity worshiped both by the emperor and on his authority. The early years of the Qin Han and Roman empires saw imperially-sponsored cult increase dramatically, and saw the positioning of the person of the emperor at the center of all cult activity. In both empires, reforms to state cult and calendars were initiated as part of a larger program of consolidating power around the person of the emperor. Despite the very different challenges facing the emperors of Han and Rome, there is a remarkable similarity in the areas in which they chose to consolidate their power, as well as the methods through which they carried out their reforms. In both empires, the rulers sought the advice of advisors from outside of the traditional elite, incorporating astronomical and religious knowledge from diverse regions and peoples. This outside knowledge and practices were then incorporated into state cult, reshaping the way that the emperors and their subordinates worshiped. I argue that these reforms to cult, and the incorporation of outside knowledge, were fundamental to the consolidation of power in the person of the emperor. Examining the expansion of cult practices, calendrical reforms, and spectacular performances, the dissertation uncovers the processes in the transformation of imperial cult to fit the changing needs of empire. Rather than seeking parallels in belief systems or cult practice, the dissertation compares the ways in which religious institutions both shaped and communicated a new imperial order. The juxtaposition of the two societies reveals not only the similarities and differences in these processes, but also the biases of historical sources and subsequent scholarship in both fields.

Yang, Lei. Ph.D. University of Pennsylvania, 2016.
Building Blocks of Chinese Historiography: A Narratological Analysis of "Shi ji." Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI. (Publication No. 10134951.)

In *Shi ji* studies, scholars from both the East and West have predominantly taken one particular approach: the psychological reading of its author, Sima Qian. Since the author suffered penal castration when he was writing the *Shi ji*, this approach has been summarized as "the theory of conveying one's frustration." Many scholars, modern and pre-modern alike, have inferred the author's feelings and emotions from his biographical experiences and have interpreted the text accordingly. This narrow interpretation constrains our understanding by exclusively focusing on the author's personal pains and purposes. Such analysis thus commits the intentional fallacy, which mistakenly equates the author with the text, unjustifiably simplifying the complicated interpretive process.

I explore the features of the text itself, shifting the focus of research from the author's intention to the effects produced by its narrative devices, which have determinative influence over the interpretive process but have long been overlooked. I explore the role of narrative as a medium in historical works, applying theories of narratology from the French Structuralist Gérard Genette to analyze narratives in the *Shi ji*. By setting the text into this framework, I systematically examine the narrative sequences, such as anticipation and flashback, narrative duration and mood, and characterization. My investigation shows that these narrative devices produce literary effects, distinguishing *Shi ji* from both earlier and later histories such as the *Zuo zhuan* and *Han shu*. *Shi ji* presents a highly complicated past by manipulating interrelations among historical events, regulating information, and emphasizing changes and their effects. It pays most attention to how the historical events happened, more than what happened and why a significant issue has not been discussed in a context of Chinese historiography. My narratological approach provides an alternative perspective and explores new territory in *Shi ji* studies.

Zürn, Tobias Benedikt. Ph.D. University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2016. *Writing as Weaving: Intertextuality and the* Huainanzi's *Self-Fashioning as an Embodiment of the Way*. Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI. (Publication No. 10155738.)

In her seminal essay "Against Interpretation" from 1964, Susan Sontag (1933–2004) tackled the dominant position of interpretation as the default mode of engagements with cultural objects. Since she sounded the call to defy the common hermeneutic strategy of emphasizing content over form more than fifty years ago, the phenomenon of privileging the production and deduction of meaning over the immediate presence of cultural objects persists in the humanities. In my specific case, scholars in the field of Early China still read scriptures predominantly within an assumed philosophical context displaying a reductionist approach to writings that precludes from the outset the possibility of any non-discursive function(s) for texts. In other words, their interpretations rarely consider textual artifacts to be agents within contexts such as ritual or gift exchanges. My dissertation, titled "Writing as Weaving: Intertextuality and the *Huainanzi*'s Self-Fashioning as an Embodiment of the Way," addresses this issue from the vantage point of the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, a highly constructed and intertextual scripture from the second century B.C.E. that scholars have traditionally read in philosophical terms. Contrary to its current interpretation as an encyclopedic collection of philosophical treatises, the dissertation shows that the *Huainanzi*, which Liu

An 劉安 (c. 179–122 B.C.E., r. 164–122 B.C.E.), the king of Huainan 淮南, presumably presented in 139 B.C.E. at his inaugural visit to his nephew Emperor Wu 漢武帝 (born Liu Che 劉徹; 156–87 B.C.E., r. 141–87 B.C.E.), had been fashioned as a powerful manifestation of the Way (*dao* 道).

In the first part of the dissertation, I demonstrate that the *Huainanzi* employs at least three of the images—of a tree's root (*ben* 本), a chariot wheel's hub (*gu* 轂) or axle (*zhou* 軸), and a weaving (*jingwei* 經緯) or knotting (*jigang* 紀綱) texture—that are commonly associated with the cosmos and the power (*de* 德) of the Dao to create a homology between the Liu clan's scripture (*Liushi zhi shu* 劉氏之書), the sage, and the Way. Hence, I propose that the *Huainanzi* had been fashioned in image (*xiang* 象) of the force that underlies the organization of the universe. In the second part of the dissertation, I showcase through the example of weaving that the *Huainanzi* is not merely depicted in homological terms with the Way. Based on a perceived correlation of the practices of writing and weaving during the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.), I suggest that the *Huainanzi* in fact mimics and implements the cosmic process of weaving in its design and intertextual writing practice. By inserting and connecting various traces (*ji* 跡) of the words (*yan* 言) and deeds (*shi* 事) of pre-Han writers and kings in its texture, Liu An and his workshop apparently fashioned the Liu clan's scripture both as being in image and as an embodiment of the Way (*tidao* 體道)—of the very force that connects and weaves together the celestial patterns (*tianwen* 天文) and terrestrial forms (*dixing* 地形) into a cosmic texture. Consequently, I speculate in my conclusion that Liu An and his workshop might have created the Liu clan's scripture in image and as an embodiment of the Way in order to produce an wuwei-performing textual artifact that fulfills a similar role as the sage. By belonging to the Dao's universal image or appearance category (*xiang zhi lei* 像之類 or *xinglei* 形類), the *Huainanzi*, like the sage, would create resonating correspondences (*ganying* 感應) with all the Myriad Beings (*wanwu* 萬物) and therefore would be able to impact and organize the entire world. Accordingly, my dissertation claims that we should further explore the possibility of non-discursive functions for Liu An's miscellaneous and highly intertextual texture and potentially many other early Chinese texts. In fact, we should renegotiate the *Huainanzi*'s current and almost naturally assumed categorization as a "mere" encyclopedia and/or miscellaneous collection of philosophical treatises that educates about rather than actualizes or effects sagely rulership and cosmic order.