The First Annual Society for the Study of Early China Conference

Time: 9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., Thursday, 21 March 2013
Place: Manchester Grand Hyatt Hotel, San Diego (location of the AAS Annual Conference)
Room: Edward C

The Society for the Study of Early China announces its first annual conference, to be held the day before the 2013 Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting in San Diego. The conference schedule and presentation abstracts are below and also available on the Society’s website (www.earlychina.org). **The conference is free of charge and open to all scholars interested in early China** (AAS registration is not required). You are welcome to attend presentations, sessions, or the entire conference. However, we urge you to become a member of the Society by subscribing to its journal, *Early China* (www.dartmouth.edu/~earlychina/publications/orders-fsseec-publications.html).

**Organizers**
Sarah Allan (Dartmouth College) – Chair, Society for the Study of Early China
Organizing committee: F. Janice Kam (Western Washington University), Andrew Meyer (Brooklyn College), Charles Sanft (University of Arizona)

**Schedule** *Each presenter will have 20 minutes to speak followed by 10 minutes for questions.*

**Session 1, chair: F. Janice Kam**

1 0900 – 0930 “Sima Qian’s Travels and Their Significance” Trever McKay

2 0930 – 1000 “New Information on Qin Religious Practice: Evidence from Liye and Zhoujiatai” Charles Sanft

3 1000 – 1030 “A Reevaluation of Early Chinese Script Based on Archaeological Evidence: The Case of an Axe and Its Cultural Connotations” Wan Xiang

4 1030 – 1100 “Line of Sight: The Creation of Early Chinese Cartographic Space” Garret Olberding

1100 – 1130 Break

**Session 2, chair: Charles Sanft**

5 1130 – 1200 “The Pitfalls of Second-hand Information: Dealing with Chinese Excavation Reports” Armin Selbitschka

6 1200 – 1230 “Antiquarianism without Antiques: A Study of the Jin Gong Basin and Its Methodological Significance” Lei Chin-hau

7 1230 – 1300 “Two yuan and Four Quarters” David Nivison

1300 – 1330 Lunch
Session 3, chair: Andrew Meyer

8 1330 – 1400 “The Diagram of the Taiyi Incantation from Mawangdui” Lai Guolong
9 1400 – 1430 “A Centaur in Confucian Robes: The Interaction between Han and Hellenist Art” Miao Zhe
10 1430 – 1500 “‘Author of or Authored by’: The Authorship of the ‘Grand Scribe’s Self-narration’” Zhang Hanmo
1500 – 1530 Break

Session 4, chair: Sarah Allan

12 1600 – 1630 “Punitive Ghosts, ‘Sagely Illumination,’ and History: The Concept of ming 明 in Mozi’s ‘Ming gui’ 明鬼” Piotr Gibas
13 1630 – 1700 “Money in the Guanzi’s Qingzhong chapters” Tamara Chin
14 1700 – 1730 SSEC business Sarah Allan

Abstracts

1. Trever McKay 余其濬 (Brigham Young University)
“Sima Qian’s Travels and Their Significance”
In compiling his 2,500 year history of ancient China, Sima Qian relied heavily on the textus receptus available in Western Han. Yet, this was not enough to write authoritatively on ancient history. Thus he employed other methods to ascertain historical facts, one of which was to travel throughout the empire on several different occasions—both by himself and as an escort for Emperor Wu. While his travels are often mentioned as part of his research methods, they are seldom addressed independently and in depth. This paper discusses the scope of his travels, discusses evidence of separate excursions, and expounds on their significance in compiling Shiji. Instances of his travels mentioned in Shiji are discussed in detail.

It is a common belief that these travels were attempts to make up for deficiencies in the textus receptus. While this is true in part, this study finds that in addition to this, Sima Qian used his travels to bolster argumentation, proffer alternative explanations to historical events, and correct historical traditions. Specifically, in several chapters his arguments against contemporary scholarly theories or beliefs were based on his travels. In other chapters, he speaks of filling in gaps in his own understanding, be they geographical, linguistic, or otherwise. An offshoot of this was to deepen his understanding of those whose works particularly moved him (Confucius, Qu Yuan, etc.). A third use was to give better descriptions of the fame, glory, wealth, and prestige certain historical figures achieved, only to use this as a foil to make his condemnation of their character faults and shortcomings all the more acrid.
2. Charles Sanft 陳力強 (University of Arizona)  
“New Information on Qin Religious Practice: Evidence from Liye and Zhoujiatai”  
In this talk I discuss paleographic records of local-level religious practices during the Qin dynasty from Liye and Zhoujiatai. The Liye materials are bureaucratic records of state-sponsored sacrifices that took place in 215 and 212 BCE. They indicate the types of sacrifices and reflect the processes by which the bureaucracy managed the items offered. The Zhoujiatai text appears to give instructions for individual sacrifices and provides information about the locations and types of offerings, as well as the verbal formulae employed. Since in the past there was virtually nothing extant about local religious activity under the Qin, the information these texts provide is a significant advance in understanding the history of the period.

3. Wan Xiang 萬翔 (University of Pennsylvania)  
“A Reevaluation of Early Chinese Script Based on Archaeological Evidence: The Case of an Axe and Its Cultural Connotations”  
Recently established chronologies and typologies of excavated artifacts may modify previous understandings of visual and symbolic representation in ancient Chinese script. Through systematic paleographic and archaeological examination, this paper suggests that a graph found in the late Shang script on oracle bones and shells as well as bronze and pottery vessels, traditionally transcribed as yuè 戰 and translated as “axe,” along with its physical prototype, is etymologically and graphically distinct from the later attested graph 戰, transcribed as yuè 戰 in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions. The “elliptic-bladed” late Shang graph can be associated with socketed axes, a typical weapon of the Northern Zone metallurgic tradition. The Western Zhou graph reflects a broader concept of indigenous Chinese axes, a ceremonial implement indicative of the exalted status of its owners. I tentatively identify the late Shang graph with a later graph of the received orthography through textual and phonological evidence. Demonstrating that the previously often-neglected precision of visual representation in early Chinese script and the excessive dependence on the received text might have been responsible for the misinterpretation, I assess the cultural connotation of the distinction between these two categories of axes. I argue that bronze cultures of the Loess Plateau and its vicinity, absorbing technologies from farther west, had exercised significant influence over the late Shang center at Anyang since the reign of King Wu Ding, and were entangled in the military activities and the tributary system of the Shang.

4. Garret Olberding 歐經朋 (University of Oklahoma)  
“Line of Sight: The Creation of Early Chinese Cartographic Space”  
The compositional norms with which early Chinese geographic maps were designed remain little understood. Similar to other ancient maps, all are rough diagrams of uncertain geographic area and indefinite purpose. In my paper, using comparisons with pre- and post-Renaissance European maps, as well as statements on optics found in the later Mohist canons, I will analyze what the maps from Mawangdui and Fangmatan reveal about the standards of reflective signification involved in their creation; for instance, their employment of perspective and contrast. Juxtaposed against what one might call the Renaissance’s “geometry of sight.” I also wish to highlight the employment of certain related aesthetic sensibilities, such as the regular use of linear definition and empty space. Through such analysis, I aim to demonstrate certain definitive aspects of their
logic and organization and offer some additional insight into early Chinese representations of cartographic space.

5. Armin Selbitschka 謝藏 (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München/Stanford University)
“The Pitfalls of Second-hand Information: Dealing with Chinese Excavation Reports”
The emergence of archaeology as an independent discipline during the early 1950s directly resulted in the establishment of three major archaeological journals – Wenwu (1950), Kaogu xuebao (1951), and Kaogu (1955) – as outlets for information gathered through fieldwork; excavation reports followed. Nowadays, we have roughly three dozen archaeological periodicals and surely more than a thousand reports covering all areas and periods of Chinese (pre)history at our disposal. These publications are our primary sources of information. However, the fact that they are anything but primary sources in a strictly methodological sense hardly gets acknowledged.

In reality, excavation reports – preliminary as well as final – most often only provide a sample of actual data collected from archaeological sites. Consequently, we are constantly dealing with deliberate choices of editors on what particular information to divulge. This paper shall demonstrate that the nature and quality of findings are the main deciding factors in this process. For instance, even looted tombs dating from the Zhanguo and Han periods yielding manuscripts generally take precedence over undisturbed graves discovered at the same cemetery simply because they contain manuscripts. Many conclusions concerning such burials are therefore based on a rather small number of published tombs, while the often more representative majority of equally accessible graves remain unnoticed. In short, this paper aims to raise awareness of a pressing methodological problem. In doing so, it will address various rationales behind the practice of presenting selective evidence in excavation reports and suggest several ways to cope with it.

6. Lei Chin-hau 雷晉豪 (National Taiwan University/Columbia University)
“Antiquarianism without Antiques: A Study of the Jin Gong Basin 晉公盆 and Its Methodological Significance”
The Jin Gong Basin belongs to a large group of inscribed bronze vessels that were discovered in the premodern or early modern times but were lost in the turbulent years of the modern era. However, rubbings of this vessel and its inscription are included in a series of catalogues. If authentic, they suggest this vessel may have been the only one known to have been cast by a Jin ruler during the Spring and Autumn period. The present paper demonstrates a way to effectively authenticate the source of this bronze vessel by establishing its provenance and carefully analyzing all existing rubbings. The vessel’s inscription records an important marriage between the two hegemonic states of Jin and Chu. But the date of this marriage, which may provide information about the date of the vessel, has been hotly debated by previous scholars. This paper therefore further contextualizes the inscription by means of contemporary textual sources from the Spring and Autumn period. It concludes that the vessel must have been cast in 578 BC, and the recorded marriage may be the first “honey trap” (meiren ji 美人計) recorded in Chinese history. It is hoped that the same method can be applied also to other inscribed bronzes in the same category, thus helping rescue an important pool of contemporaneous historical records for the study of early China.
7. David S. Nivison 倪德衛 (Stanford University)  
“Two yuan and Four Quarters”  
The Nivison-Shaughnessy 2-yuan theory for Western Zhou has dates for most of each reign counted from the king’s succession year, but late in his reign (exactly when, and why the change, remains puzzling) dates are counted from the year after he completed mourning for his father, which we call his accession year. One result is that the king’s death is recorded in his accession calendar. Recovering accurate chronology is obviously impossible without taking this fact into account. Also, interpreting late dates in an inscription can be impossible using a succession count. This is what mainland Chinese scholars are doing, however, so they conclude that Wang Guowei’s so-called “four-quarters” interpretation of lunar phase terms in dates is wrong. They have invented a new “two halves” system—defended by Xu Fengxian in the latest issue of *Early China* (33-34)—which takes into account only a small part of the difficulty. My paper shows this by analyzing dates in late Xuan Wang inscriptions. I try also to present a case for an adjusted four quarters theory that is beyond reasonable doubt. I do this by combining an analysis of the Jin Hou Su bianzhong inscription (795-794) with the dates, day by day, of the Zhou five-month campaign conquering Shang (1040). The end of the third lunar quarter and the beginning of the fourth are exactly the same in each. The result: Wang Guowei is vindicated, and with him so is the 2-yuan theory.

8. Lai Guolong 來國龍 (University of Florida)  
“The Diagram of the Taiyi Incantation from Mawangdui”  
Among the silk manuscripts excavated from Tomb 3 at Mawangdui, there is a small silk diagram that has not yet attracted the attention of art historians. In previous discussions on the origin of the Chinese pictorial tradition, scholars have focused on the technical aspects of the illusionist presentation, the depiction of depth (3D) on 2D surface, and so forth. Very little attention has been paid to the use of image and its relationship with text and context. In this paper I will analyze this diagram in both the ritual context of spirit travel and the evolution of pictorial representation in early China. The internal clues and external evidence suggest that the text on the right edge of the diagram needs to be rearranged. In addition, this evidence shows that the incantation text bears a close relationship to the images depicted on the diagram. This diagram can teach as much about the use of the images in Early China as the silk banner because of the explicit help from the inscriptions.  

This Mawangdui diagram occupies an important transitional role in the evolution of visual culture in early China. Here the main figure is no longer the subject of “image magic” but is instead a traveler, someone with whom the living could identify. This shift away from the magical potency of images to a new kind of figural representation, in which hybrid images fused anthropomorphic form and zoomorphic attributes, signaled an important change in early Chinese attitudes toward representation during the Warring States and early Han periods.
9. Miao Zhe (Zhejiang University)
“A Centaur in Confucian Robes: The Interaction between Han and Hellenist Art”
Eighthy years ago Michael Rostovtzeff wrote, “The new inspiration (of Han art) certainly came from some sources which were connected with Greek Hellenistic Art.” This conclusion certainly resulted from a sense of Eurocentrism as well as the lack of archaeological information at that time. After World War II, with the abandonment of Eurocentrism and the excavation of new materials, a more accurate view, which holds that Han art was primarily indigenous, was established. However, this view has also prompted many scholars (especially, but not only, those in mainland China) to neglect or even deny the connection between Hellenist and Han art. The purpose this paper is to argue that there are recognizable links between Han art and the Hellenistic art.

I will cite four artistic motifs to support my argument: the frontal quadriga, the frontal horse, the eagle biting the hare, and the centaur, all of which were original to and well-established in Greek art, and which spread eastward to China through the Steppes of Central Asia. Here “Han art” is defined as the artworks produced within China proper, especially the stone carvings or brick impressions from shrines and tombs in Shandong and Henan. As expressions of Chinese indigenous ideas or ideology during the Han period, these works could help us to see clearly the extent to which Han art interacted with foreign art. This approach will able us to view Han art in a broader context, and shed new light on the interaction between the East and West before and after the first century A.D.

10. Zhang Hanmo (University of California, Los Angeles)
“‘Author of or Authored by’: The Authorship of the ‘Grand Scribe’s Self-narration’”
The “Grand Scribe’s Self-narration” has long been considered one of the most important pieces for interpreting the *Shiji*, or the *Grand Scribe’s Writings*, as a body of text. Since Sima Qian is regarded as its author by default, the authorial voices projected through this piece have consequently been assumed to reflect Sima Qian’s authorial intent. Nevertheless, a careful examination of the *Shiji* postface not only reveals the complexity of this piece of writing in terms of the different voices and hands involved in its formation and transmission, but it also raises doubt about the long held idea that the *Shiji* postface was penned by Sima Qian or reflects his authorial intent at all. As a result, the widely received conventional explanation centering on Sima Qian’s authorial intent has to be reconsidered, and this constitutes the focus of this presentation.

11. Anne Kinney (University of Virginia)
Early Chinese texts are almost exclusively concerned with leisure’s destructive potential. Preoccupation with the destructive power of leisure is, in part, connected to a belief in the ease with which seemingly trivial acts committed when one is not on duty, off-guard, or seemingly unobserved can evolve into full-blown disaster. Leisure also becomes a danger when it is equated with “letting go,” and throwing off the restraints that usually constrain behavior. Early texts also express anxiety that various forms of sensory stimulation—drunkenness, collecting precious objects, hunting, music—will override one’s moral sensibilities, filial obligations, or political duties. The simultaneous identification of one’s private and personal life with the public spheres of political and ritual behavior contribute to the anxiety and seemingly unavoidable contradictions
that leisure generates. In the *Zuo zhuan*, the space that leisure occupies represents one in a series of loci of intense interest and anxiety, a sphere whose centrifugal force reverberates and sends shock waves throughout the entire political sphere. Somewhat surprisingly, the “free and easy” realm of Daoist sensibilities found in the *Zhuangzi*, for example, with its injunctions to transcend categories such as pleasure and pain or personal likes and dislikes, also reveals scant approval of leisure activities. Instead, somewhat surprisingly, it is in the Confucian *Analects* that we see the first whole-hearted endorsement of leisure. This paper will explore how *Analects 11:25* articulates a vision of personal and non-purposive enjoyment.

12. Piotr Gibas 齊百思 (College of Charleston)
“Punitive Ghosts, ‘Sagely Illumination,’ and History: The Concept of *ming* 明 in Mozi’s ‘Ming gui’ 明鬼”
This paper offers a new reading of *Mozi*’s chapter “Ming gui” 明鬼, conventionally considered as a treatise explaining Mohist ideas about ghosts and spirits, in the light of a recently excavated text. The “Gui shen zhi ming, Rongshi yu Chengshi” 鬼神之明, 融師有成氏 from the Chu Bamboo Strips in the Shanghai Museum Collection (SBZ) has been identified as a missing text belonging to the Mohist canon and closely related to the *Mozi* “Ming gui” in particular, with a special focus on the concept of *ming* 明, “sagely illumination.” Based on a reading of the manuscript, I demonstrate that the “Ming gui” chapter does not discuss ghosts in general, as previous readings seem to assume; instead, it is about a specific group of ghosts endowed with a set of particular qualities and functions—the “punitive ghosts,” who are in charge of the execution of justice. The chapter, then, focuses on defining and understanding the quality of “illumination”—*ming* 明—the ability to discern right from wrong, and consequently, to mete out punishments and rewards. Mozi’s insistence on these qualities suggests a moral, politically pragmatic stance rather than an ontological one. In the doctrine laid out in the treatise, much less emphasis is put on the dogmatic belief in the physical existence of ghosts and in their actual execution of rewards and punishments, and much more on the principle of justice and Heaven’s agency in human life.

13. Tamara Chin (University of Chicago)
“Money in the *Guanzi*’s Qingzhong chapters”
This paper reconsiders the literary and economic significance of a set of passages from the “Qingzhong” chapters of the *Guanzi*. It explores aspects of language (including technical metaphors, imagery, personification) in relation to that of excavated and received mathematical, historiographic, philosophical, and legal texts from the second and first centuries BCE. It focuses particularly on how the “Qingzhong” chapters articulated notions of money and credit that departed from other monetary theories to be found in early China or elsewhere in antiquity.