Universität Münster


# Same and/or Other? Animals in East Asian History

## Abstracts

08–10 May 2025

Institute of Sinology and East Asian Studies, University of Münster

living.knowledge

CHINESE ANIMAL STUDIES NETWORK

Fachbereich 09 Philologie

Institut für Sinologie und Ostasienkunde

## Contents

*Abe Yukinobu (Chuo University)*

## Night Moths and Fireflies: New Visual Images of Night in the Six Dynasties

This presentation traces the changing image of night from the Han to the Northern and Southern Dynasties by analysing the role of animals in literary works. Until the Han dynasty, when human activities were basically limited to the daytime, the night was a different world dominated by the sounds of nature. Although the moon shone in the sky, there were no visual images of animals in literary works. Instead, people could hear the sounds of animals: owls, roosters, apes, and crickets. After the Jin dynasty, however, there were frequent depictions of moths flying into the fire of lamps and fireflies flying around. This suggests that as people's habits of staying up after dark became more common during this period, and as people's living spaces expanded to suburban villas and mountain villages, they became familiar with night insects. It is noteworthy that the depiction of night moths is a common motif in Southern Dynasties works, but is almost absent in Northern Dynasties. This discrepancy is probably due to the different environmental conditions between the northern and southern regions of China. North China was originally dry, and deforestation had progressed over the years, resulting in the loss of much insect habitat. On the other hand, the Jiannan area was hot and humid, and there were many undeveloped forests, so many insects lived there. Therefore, the insects that gathered around light or glowed in the dark became part of a new visual image of the night in the Jiannan area earlier than in North China. The anecdote about Che-Yin 車胤 in Eastern Jin reading books by the light of fireflies was an illustration of this historical and natural environment.

Panel 7: Visual Animals as Same/Other

*Agnew, Christopher S. (University of Dayton)*

## Incommensurables? Comparing Human and Animal in the Work of Lü Kun (1536–1618)

This paper examines human and animal comparisons in late Ming statecraft thought through the lens of the works of Lü Kun 呂坤 (1536–1618). Widely known in subsequent centuries for his writings on statecraft, Lü Kun's work was repeatedly edited and reissued in China and Japan in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Most historical work on Lü has focused on his writings on provincial administration, on city defence, and on his illustrated work on moral exemplars for women. In Lü Kun's "Incommensurables" (*wuru* 無如), he asks the reader to contemplate the line that separates human from animal, and to consider what humans could learn from animals about proper moral and ethical behaviour. Beginning with the title, the conceptual framework is structured around comparisons. Not just comparisons between human and animal, but also between human and human. The book

organizes its anecdotes and commentary into the four categories of humans, beasts, birds, and insects. For Lü, the reading subject is invited to consider the human unwillingness to think of other creatures and people as commensurable beings, and the consequences that this has on enabling cruelty and violence towards these "incommensurables."

Lü Kun's book contributes to our understanding of Chinese animal history in several important ways. First, though the work focuses on conceptualizing and comparing the moral behaviours of the human and non-human, it is also consistent with the practical Confucian statecraft focus of Lü Kun's more famous writings. Second, Lü Kun writes in conversation with other contemporary works in the *pulu* 譜錄 ("treatises and lists") genre on animals, and in this sense reflects on and departs from the perspectives of a broader Ming scholarly community.

Panel 2: Conceptual Considerations

*Beck, Anna Lisa (Universität Zürich)*

## Shark and/or human: A Perspective on *jiaoren* 鮫人 in the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽

Throughout human history, communities have been amazed and intrigued by what lies beyond the surface of the ocean. Dark, cold, and unruly, it obscures great mysteries that have inspired storytellers over centuries and are – to this very day – far from being fully understood. In some ways, the ocean could be summarised as the ultimate "other" and so can its inhabitants. My research deals with sharks (*sha* 鯊/*jiao* 鮫 and the existing variants of these characters), alleged monsters of the ocean's depths and sources of medical ingredients, culinary extravagance, and sword handles. In this contribution, I investigate the mysterious *jiaoren* 鮫人 (shark-humans) in the encyclopaedic *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 from the Northern Song dynasty. According to the text, *jiaoren* live like fish and produce pearls with their tears. But where does the *jiao* end and the *ren* 人 begin? And what does it mean to be either one of those? What does it mean to be both?

Here, I present some preliminary findings on the *jiaoren* of the *Taiping yulan*, contributing in various ways to the CASN and beyond. Firstly, this study summarises some reflections on shark-related terminologies that are otherwise ambiguous and overall fishy. Secondly, I identify markers of selfness and otherness, of fishness and humaneness, thus illuminating our understanding of Chinese conceptualizations of human-animal relations. Lastly, this study provides an example of hybridity between the human and the non-human, as well as its reception. Is it acceptable to be both human and non-human? Under which circumstances?

Panel 6: Animals as Same/Other in Literature

*Boccardi, Andrea (University of Leeds/Masaryk University)*

## Fantastic Beasts of the Okinawan War: War Narratives and Colonial Ambiguity in *Teppō wo motta kijimunā* (1996)

The *kijimunaa* is a mythological creature belonging to the Okinawan folklore. Often described as being child-sized, the *kijimunaa* are said to live in trees, be excellent fishermen, and have an ambiguous relationship with humans. Although this creature frequently appears in Indigenous Okinawan folktales, its positionality as part of the broader corpus of Japanese mythical creatures reflects the complex socio-political relationship between Okinawa and mainland Japan. After being absorbed into the Japanese Empire in the late 19th century, Okinawa became the setting of the most gruesome battle fought in the Pacific area during World War II, it was ceded to the American military and ultimately reverted to Japan in 1972 without removing the military bases from the territory. While the artistic re-elaboration of the traumatic war experience and positionality of Okinawan communities have been frequent objects of study, this paper aims to discuss the literary and visual representation of the *kijimunaa* as a creature in-between the human and the animal world that complicates the understanding of Okinawan and Japanese identities and war narratives. Through a close reading of the picture book *Teppō wo motta kijimunā* (*The kijimunaa with a gun*, 1996), this paper investigates the relationship between the Okinawan human community and the non-human world, as well as the imbrication of fantastic and historical events as a way to illuminate the trauma, local narratives and the contradictions inherent in the positionality of Okinawan communities during the war. It further argues that the depiction of the *kijimunaa* represents an element of disruption that can help us re-question the fantastic as a method to tell untold stories and re-discuss Indigenous perspectives.

Panel 5: Animals as Same/Other in Times of Crisis

*Boittout, Joachim (Université Paris Cité)*

## Animals in the City: Humans, Animals, and the Urban Environment in the *Illustrated News from the Dianshizhai* (*Dianshizhai huabao* 點石齋畫報)

Founded in the wake of the *Shenbao* by Ernest Major and successfully published between 1884 and 1898 in Shanghai, the lithographic magazine *Dianshizhai huabao* constitutes a major source for the visual history of the period and has been the subject of numerous studies focusing, among other aspects, on urban transformations and interactions between Chinese and foreigners within the city's international concession. Conceived as both the witness to and the Chinese commentator of an introduced foreign "modernity," and of the hesitations and rejections provoked by its everyday as well as unusual manifestations, the *Illustrated News* enjoyed immense success with the public and achieved

wide circulation, contributing to the creation of a "global imaginary" open to an increasingly diverse and numerous audience (Wagner 2007).

Animals occupy an important place in the total number of illustrations in the *Illustrated News* and offer perspectives that have so far been under-studied concerning their representations in a popular medium of late 19th-century China. The diversity of species represented is particularly evident in the coexistence of real species (horse, dog, snake, tiger, etc.) and fantastical creatures, which feed into one of the magazine's publication categories, the "extraordinary tales" (*qiwen* 奇聞) (Chen and Xia 2001). This paper examines the representation of relationships between humans and animals within the urban space through this dichotomy, paying particular attention to the emotions elicited by the different species, both real and fantastical. Do emotional categories (fear, sympathy, disgust, etc.) allow for a clear distinction between these types of animals? Does the inclusion of domestic and/or productive species within urban space, and their encounter with modernity, alter the perceptions of these animals? Finally, does the representation of Shanghai's urban modernity in the magazine result in a redefinition of the status of the animal?

Panel 7: Visual Animals as Same/Other

*Devienne, Frédéric (Université Paris Cité)*

## Dogs Serving Humans according to Confucian Ideology: In the Light of Iconographic Materials

The metaphor of the dog as a servant is common in Chinese ancient texts from the Pre-Imperial period. Paragon of domestic animals who wear themselves out to serve their masters, swift animals that still need the hand of human to guide them, dogs are subject to a certain ambivalence. The dog can be regarded as the most faithful companion but on the other hand, it can be sacrificed without any hesitation, sometimes very brutally. The representations of dogs slaughtered at the water well in the offering chambers of the famous Wuliangci 武梁祠 thus echo the many edifying textual anecdotes from the Confucian tradition where dogs end up, literally, in the pan.

However, in pre-imperial Confucian texts, dogs are rarely mentioned, even if they are an integral part of rituals. At the end of Antiquity and under the Han dynasty, in particular, a new perspective was taken on this animal. The numerous figures of dogs in the tombs are the first testimony to this. Furthermore, at the same time, not only do the moral prescriptions against him suggest more compassion and respect, but also the iconographic production (stone carvings) and in the material culture (funeral statuettes) attest to a change in behaviour.

By examining the iconography of the Han dynasty, this presentation will endeavour to show how the view of the dog may have changed at the end of Antiquity in China. The goal is to answer the following

questions. Is this the shift to a new understanding of human-animal relationships, the dog beginning to be seen as a pet? How strong and how does remain the task of utility for the dogs? Is the benevolent recognition towards the dog part of a moral edification? Is it only a metaphor of the master/servant relationship regarding the strongness of Confucian tradition?

Panel 4: Living with Animals

*Duan Baihui (Lancaster University)*

## Pests and Their Impacts on Humans: An Environmental History of Infectious Diseases During Mongol Invasions in East Asia

By closely scrutinizing historical documents on epidemics and pests, this article situates epidemic outbreaks within a broader environmental context that encompasses not only Korea but also Song China, Japan and Vietnam in the thirteenth century. Although there is no direct evidence to suggest the same pathogens for the parallel of epidemics across East Asia, these countries shared the similarities of being invaded by the Mongols and such wartime vulnerable environmental conditions and the climate anomalies of the thirteenth century could be the main environmental variables to precipitate these widespread outbreaks in these regions. A key question remains regarding the type of the wartime infectious diseases. This article adopts environmental perspectives to explore whether the thirteenth-century outbreaks in East Asia especially Korea might be connected to the Black Death or could potentially be typhus – commonly seen in warfare – or something else. Without ruling out the possibility that the Mongol invasions may have transported new pathogens to the Korean peninsula, I argue that the environmental legacy of these invasions was to create a new cultural disease environment in Korea. The frequently mentioned presence of rodents and lice, likely transported by the Mongol cavalry, which posed a threat to daily Korean life during the prolonged Mongol invasion periods, suggesting the possible outbreaks of plague or typhus. Furthermore, the Mongol nomadic culture with its affinity to livestock like horses, cattle and sheep also created another environment conducive to bacteria transmission. Even after the invasions ended, the established disease environments and continuous movements of people continued to affect the Korean peninsula and its animal and human inhabitants during the thirteenth and fourteenth-century Koryŏ dynasty.

Panel 5: Animals as Same/Other in Times of Crisis

*Granger, Kelsey (University of Edinburgh)*

## Peach-blossom's Lament: An Act of Dangerous Animal Loyalty in the Early Song Dynasty

This talk centres on the curious historiographical controversy stirred up by the diminutive dog Peach-blossom. This little dog faithfully mourned its owner Song Emperor Taizong on his death in 997 CE, refusing to eat and dragging itself, haggard and forlorn, after the funerary procession. What should have been merely a sentimental footnote in history instead sparked a debate between court historians who wrestled over whether this undying loyalty could, and should, be preserved in the *Veritable Records* (*shilu* 實錄) summarising Taizong's reign.

The debate incited by Peach-blossom, ostensibly a matter of comparatively minor importance, enlivens the turbulent compilation of *Veritable Records* under Emperors Taizong and Zhenzong. What made Peach-blossom such a divisive and controversial subject? I argue that Peach-blossom's loyalty not only superseded human morality, but challenged human political order. In doing so, I show how animal morality, elsewhere considered inferior to human's, could be problematic, political, and transgressive.

Online Panel

*Han Kyuhyun (University of Rhode Island)*

## From Lords of the Mountain to Goofy Roe Deer: Emotions, Wildlife, and Governance in Maoist Northeast China

This paper examines the transformation of human-wildlife relations in Northeast China from the early 1950s to the 1960s, focusing on how emotions such as fear, sympathy, and humour attached to specific species shaped state policies and local interactions with wildlife. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, large-scale migration into the Northeast forests began. State authorities constructed forest farms and rail networks to utilize timber resources for industrial development and to render the region – long viewed as a haven for criminals, GMD spies, and counter-revolutionaries – legible to the state.

Human incursions into the forests brought settlers into close contact with wildlife, including the fearsome Amur tigers, revered as the "Lords of the Mountain" (*shan laoye*), the menacing Asian black bears, and the whimsically nicknamed "Goofy Siberian roe deer" (*sha paozi*). Drawing on local oral records and gazetteers, this paper examines how both humans and wildlife responded to these changes, ranging from horror stories of people being attacked by predators to animals displaying curiosity toward novel objects introduced by settlers. These interactions reveal the complexities of life in the newly settled forests, provoking diverse emotional responses, from fear to curiosity and sympathy.

Finally, this paper highlights the emotional gap between central cadres, who designed wildlife-related campaigns such as hunting and conservation policies, and local residents, who interacted daily with animals. This disconnection between top-down policy design and grassroots realities often led to unanticipated outcomes. By exploring the intersection of emotion, policy, and ecology, this paper argues that settlers' emotional responses to wildlife influenced state-led campaigns and conservation policies while exposing broader ecological changes and governance challenges brought about by human settlement.

Online Panel

*Huang Shan (SOAS, University of London)*

## Uncovering the Origins of Musk: Deconstructing Historical Narratives and Geographic Misconceptions

This paper explores the long-standing narrative that "musk is from Tibet," examining its socio-historical origins, ecological misconceptions, and cultural impact in between the 7th and 17th centuries. The study employs an interdisciplinary approach, utilizing historical records, environmental data, and economic analysis to uncover how this misrepresentation became embedded in public consciousness. Musk, a valuable secretion from the musk deer (genus *Moschus*), was widely used in traditional medicine, perfumery, and imperial rituals across Asia. However, the persistent notion that Tibet was the primary source of musk is a construct shaped by historical trade practices, geographic reductionism, and cultural narratives.

Historical evidence indicates that musk deer were widely distributed across East Asia, including China, Mongolia, and other regions. Yet, the belief in Tibetan superiority was fuelled by Sogdian, Persian, and Arab traders who manipulated musk's provenance to maintain monopolistic control over Western markets. The symbolic identity of Tibet as an isolated and sacred land further reinforced the perception of Tibetan musk as superior, creating a misleading narrative that overlooked the broader ecological distribution of musk deer across multiple regions.

The study focuses on the influence of imperial tribute systems, trade records, and cultural texts that selectively privileged musk from Tibet, and how these practices shaped broader cultural narratives. This exploration of the millennium between the 7th and the 17th century provides a nuanced understanding of the socio-economic and cultural factors that contributed to the prominence of Tibetan musk in both Asian and Western contexts. Ultimately, this research aims to correct historical misrepresentations, offering a more balanced understanding of the musk deer's historical geolocation and significance. The findings emphasize the importance of how cultural and economic motivations

shaped narratives of resource origins and influenced both regional identities and trade practices throughout medieval and early modern history.

Panel 3: Animals as Resources

*Knapp, Keith N. (The Citadel)*

## Bearing with Humans: The Animal Others of the Mythical Heroes Gun and Yu

One of the eye-catching features of early Chinese heroes is the extent to which they are viewed as only part human: to name just a few, Fuxi and Nugua had snake bodies but human heads, Shennong had an ox's head but a human body, Goumang had a human head but an avian body. Other mythical figures, at some point during or after their lives, changed into animals. Among this category of figures, I will explore this phenomenon and its implications by taking a closer look at a well-known father-son pair: the flood-quellers Gun 鯀 and his son Yu 禹. After his execution, depending upon the account, Gun turned into a bear, three-legged turtle, dragon, fish, or a horse. While working, Yu could transform himself into a bear. Gun and Yu's connection with bears was so prevalent that in Jiangnan temples dedicated to them, sacrificing bear meat was prohibited.

This paper will focus on Gun and Yu's relationship with bears. Anthropologists have long pointed out the special relationship that pertains between bears and humans in forager cultures throughout North America and Northern Eurasia. In many, the first killed bear of the season is treated like a distinguished guest and receives special ritual treatment. This is because bears were thought to be able to understand human speech and thought, had the potential to become human, and, when skinned, look very much like humans. In northern Eurasia, bears were thought to be managed by the Great Bear Spirit, which controlled nature. This type of thinking probably inspired the belief that Gun and Yu could become or were bears. Underlying this is the notion of transformation (*hua* 化). Great spiritual beings could transform themselves into anything, whether it be animal, human, or mineral. Human and animal were just two sides of the same coin.

Panel 1: Mythological Animals as Same/Other

*Kotyk, Jeffrey (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science)*

## Anthropo-zoomorphic Forms in Chinese Astral Iconography

Following the introduction of Indian and Indo-Iranian astrology in China in the seventh and eighth centuries, various iconographical forms accompanied Buddhist visual arts, especially those of the zodiac signs and lunar mansions. Capricorn the fish-goat was famously reimagined as a giant fish, while the serpents associated with Āśleṣā became dragons. The present talk will focus on the hybrid icons in which animal and human forms were combined in unique ways. These esoteric but explicable images

highlight an intriguing instance in which the celestial divinities governing fate were imagined as neither animal nor human. They are not the traditional twelve or thirty-six animals, but they are also not the Indian Buddhist or Daoist deities that typically would be positioned as supreme figures in the heavens. It will be argued that these figures represent a divine hierarchy in China that is neither Buddhist nor Daoist, and that they depart from the conventional reluctance to impart bestial features onto the divine, thereby constituting a unique category in Chinese religion that is otherwise not recognized.

Panel 1: Mythological Animals as Same/Other

*Krusche, Renée (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg)*

## One Medicine for All? The Curious Historical Case of Veterinary Medicine in Late Imperial and 20th Century China

This paper looks at an understudied material: The Qing medical manuscript collections for animals found at the State Library in Berlin. It raises the following questions: Do these manuscripts concur with the standard of medical texts in the tradition of Chinese Medicine? How are they structured compared to their human counterpart?

Medical treatments, in humans as well as animals, aim at the recovery of a physical state often described as health. In its unique composition of physical, metaphysical and mental diagnosis, Chinese Medicine has a clear set of tools for diagnosing and treating human patients. Part of these tools can be easily transferred to non-human patients, but not all. This paper discusses how veterinary manuscripts in the late Qing were a vehicle to transfer information on diagnostics and treatments from one person to another and to merge practical animal care knowledge and a traditional medical understanding of the body of living beings. In its course, the paper assesses the method of describing animals and their symptoms to categorize the manuscript authors' understanding of the severeness and the sensitivity of the observing veterinarians. The empathy and willingness of past experts to engage with non-verbal beings and their physical strife cannot only be explained by economic incentives. The paper argues that veterinary manuscripts as part of a veterinary tradition thus not only describe medical approaches to valued but broken things, but show the historical human-animal relationship in action.

Panel 4: Living with Animals

*Lee Jisoo (University of Michigan)*

## The Art and Science of Raising Pigeons: Yu Fei'an and Pigeon-Keeping Manuals in Republican China

How did aesthetic values, emotional bonds, and scientific practices shape human interactions with domestic pigeons in Republican China? This paper examines the interplay between the creative,

relational dimensions of human-pigeon interactions and the material, scientific approaches to managing these relationships. It draws on *Raising Pigeons in the Capital* (都门豢鸽记, 1928) – a detailed account by Yu Fei-an, an artist known for his bird-and-flower paintings, documenting his personal experiences of raising pigeons – and analyses his artwork alongside contemporary manuals on keeping pigeons. These manuals highlight the introduction and adoption of modern scientific methods for breeding, training, and caring for pigeons in Republican China, for purposes such as companionship, pigeon racing, and long-distance communication in the military. Reflecting the influence of European concepts of "breed" and domestic animal management developed in the nineteenth century, some manuals also include explicit references to the use of pigeons in Europe and Japan. Thus, this paper also asks what it meant to be an animal in "modern" times, contrasting these developments with brief references to earlier texts on different types of pigeon from the late imperial era. By exploring both the aesthetic values and emotional bonds associated with pigeons and the scientific approaches to their training and care, this paper reveals how these remarkable birds were not only affected by human-driven scientific interventions such as selective breeding, but also how pigeons shaped human emotional worlds and creative practices. This underscores the inherent interdependence of human-nonhuman relationships where creativity, care, and science converge.

Panel 4: Living with Animals

*Liang Shuhao (University of Pennsylvania)*

## Our Animal, Our Resources: The Writing of Mongolian Species from Kuomintang and South Manchuria Railway Company

This paper analyses the representation of Mongolian livestock species, including cows, sheep, and horses, in publications by the South Manchuria Railway Company (SMR) and the Kuomintang's *Chinese Journal of Animal Industry* during the 1930s and 1940s. Following the establishment of Manchukuo, Japanese technocrats encountered vast Mongol territories within the boundaries of the new state. Viewing pastoralism as the sole traditional lifestyle of the indigenous Mongols and perceiving Mongolian livestock species as inferior, SMR officials advocated for developing the animal industry among the Mongols by promoting modern veterinary science to "rescue" the so-called "backward and dying Mongolian race." In contrast, the Nationalist government treated investments in veterinary science as markers of national strength and tools for conceptualizing the ideal territoriality of a unified China – a territory over which it had limited control during the war. The Nationalists placed Mongolian livestock species at the centre of Chinese animal husbandry initiatives, aiming to lead the development of the animal industry in the ethnic borderlands.

This paper argues that both states regarded the animal industry and veterinary science as solutions to broader human challenges, arenas for advancing ideological agendas, and integral components of wartime mobilization efforts. The narrative surrounding Mongolian livestock species highlights the differing ethnic policies of the two states: Japanese colonizers sought to "uplift" the Mongols, while the Nationalists regarded Mongolian species and Inner Mongolia as essential parts of China. Drawing on Japanese, Chinese, and English sources, this paper challenges regional-focused environmental histories in East Asia. It contributes to understanding the position of the understudied Mongolian territories and their livestock as contested spaces between China and Japan during the Second Sino-Japanese War.

Panel 3: Animals as Resources

*McVeigh, Rachel (Harvard University)*

## Cranes Between Object and Subject in Medieval Chinese Poetry

Cranes have long been used as allegorical stand-ins for the pure, unsullied human subject in the Chinese tradition; however, when poets began from the mid-Tang writing with greater frequency about their "pet" cranes, they faced a problem. It was the Daoist-inflected connotations of unfettered freedom that gave cultural capital to possessing cranes as ornamental objects and symbolic companions, yet these very practices required keeping them in captivity. Moreover, the material and poetic economy of crane-gifting threatened to sully the figure of the crane with an aura of mere transactionality. Poets from Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) onwards responded to this by carefully constructing imagined subjectivities, imputing some kind of "agency" to the birds and reading their behaviour in the light of human experience. Though allegorical messages relating to the life of the human poet are never far away, the lives of the cranes themselves also begin to appear through the cracks.

Previous research in this area has primarily focused on the history of crane-rearing as a practice, rather than on poets' emotional and intellectual experiences of cranes. This paper examines a substantial but little-studied corpus of poetic writings on real cranes (and not cranes-as-image) from the Tang to the Song, exploring the nuanced ways in which literati negotiated the mediated identity of the crane in text and painting on the one hand, and their own experiences of interspecies interaction with embodied cranes on the other. This opens up broader discussions about the nature of engagements with animals in the medieval period, and whether these were qualitatively different from those we witness today.

Panel 6: Animals as Same/Other in Literature

*Miller, Allison (Southwestern University)*

## The Gaze of Animals in Western Han Bronze Sculpture

The gaze of animals has often been described as unsettling. Derrida, for example, characterizes his cat's gaze as "uninterpretable, unreadable, abyssal, and secret" (Derrida 2008). The power of animal gazes stems from the fact that their eyes and gaze function differently from humans. Canine eyes, for instance, may appear to emit light. Animals don't always reciprocate our gaze, and thus may seem to challenge or convey an air of indifference towards us. Animals are a primary subject in Chinese art, yet there has been limited discussion of how the animal gaze is conceptualised. In early Shang bronzes, specific animals were indistinguishable; zoomorphic bronzes alluded to the animal world through animal parts and the iconic gaze of the taotie mask. However, the Han period saw a shift towards more realistic depictions of animals in decorative bronzes. These bronzes exhibit a "psychological realism," conveyed through the figures' gazes, surpassing earlier periods. Many animals, particularly those with monocular vision, challenge the notion of the iconic gaze. When eyes are positioned on the side of the head, what do they see, and how should this vision be interpreted? This presentation will explore depictions of human-animal and animal-animal gazes in Western Han art to understand early Chinese conceptions of animal vision. Notions of the animal gaze in bronze sculpture will be compared with Western Han textual sources and other media to demonstrate how animal gaze was conceptualized differently than in earlier periods.

Panel 7: Visual Animals as Same/Other

*Pouget, Marco (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg)*

## Stewardship and Dominion: Animal-Related Offices in the *Zhouli*

The *Zhouli* 周禮 (*Rites of Zhou*) or *Zhouguan* 周官 (*Comprehensive Offices*) outlines offices and tasks for the administration of an idealised "ritual order" thought to pervade everyday life in ancient China as much as the symbolic representations thereof in ritual. A variety of offices the *Zhouli* lists are in charge of animals, from game keepers and tamers to "cowboys" and veterinarians. The treatment of animals was thus imbued with metaphysical conceptions and ascriptions of certain qualities to animals – with significant ethical ramifications.

A contribution to conceptual history, my paper explores how animal-human relationships are reflected in the discussions of animal-related offices in the *Zhouli* and its commentarial tradition along three axes:

1. What (symbolic) qualities and capacities are ascribed to animals? In what way are animals distinguished from humans?
2. What do the expertise and practices of animal-related offices reveal about the role of animals in the ritual order?

3. What ethical norms are recognisable concerning animal treatment and welfare?

My paper will focus on the roles of humans in charge of the management and procurement of animals in the *Zhouli*. Their tasks and methods directly and indirectly reveal how animals were submitted to the ritual order of ancient China, where their use was considered normal and crucial to uphold harmony in the world. Animals were slaughtered as sacrificial victims, their meat served at ceremonial banquets, their feathers and fur decorated ritual objects. Ascribed exalted character traits and special roles within the cosmic equilibrium, they played a key role in communication with higher forces, as well as fostering social bonds among humans. In practice, this meant that animals were inexorably commodified for ritual purposes, but also afforded special treatment. The prescriptive institutional structure outlined in the text thus affirmed and codified human stewardship of "all under Heaven."

Panel 2: Conceptual Considerations

*Schmiedl, Anne (Universität Münster)*

## Same and/or Other? The Hare in Chinese Mythological Literature

This paper studies the significance of hares and their mythological meaning as auspicious omens in imperial Chinese sources.

Omens have been typologized since the Han dynasty. In a cosmological system propounding the correlation of all things in the universe, omens were seen as signs sent by heaven corresponding to events in the human world and reflecting the emperor's conduct. Omens were recorded in the dynastic histories, prominent among them Shen Yue's 沈約 (441–513) treatise on auspicious omens ("Furui 符瑞") in the *Songshu* 宋書, but also other sources, like Tang dynasty records of omens, which were presented to the throne.

Among these omens, we find the appearance of hares – often of a white colour, sometimes of a black, red, or no specific colour. In the mentioned sources, hares are simultaneously described as same and other. As wild animals they exemplify "the other". In their mythological capacity, however, they respond to and mirror human conduct, thus being understood as "same". Furthermore, some of these stories exhibit a deeper connection between human and hare protagonist, not only describing them as similar in virtue and conduct but also emphasizing the human-animal relationship and the empathy between them. By exploring instances of mythological hares as auspicious omens, this paper contributes to the understanding of animals as same and/or other in imperial China.

Panel 1: Mythological Animals as Same/Other

*Storm, Kerstin (Universität Münster)*

## Animals as Depictions of Aging in Chinese Poetry

Old age, the processes of aging, its physical symptoms and social consequences are addressed in diverse and nuanced ways across a wide range of Chinese poems. These include depictions of a life's progression, painful laments on human transience, pieces offering advice to younger generations rooted in wisdom and life experience, as well as (self-)ironic reflections on one's own decline. Particularly known are the many poems that centre on white or whitening hair. Far less known – and considerably rarer – are poems that employ animals, especially horses and oxen, as metaphors or allegorical figures to express themes related to human aging. This talk examines such poems composed between the 6th and 12th centuries. It explores the purpose and expressive power of this literary device in articulating age and aging, while also offering insights into the poets' relationships with the animals they chose to depict

Panel 6: Animals as Same/Other in Literature

*Tong, Christopher K. (University of Maryland)*

## Animal Advocacy in Early Republican China

When one is asked about the treatment of nonhuman animals in China, two conflicting series of images come to mind: the ubiquity of cat cafes and toy poodles, on the one hand, and the consumption of endangered species, on the other. In the context of this contradiction, this paper poses the question: How have the categories of "livestock," "wild animals," and "animal companions" been historically constructed in modern China?

Scholars of animal studies such as Donna Haraway and Ted Benton have tended to overlook East Asia. Classics in modern Chinese history such as Judith Shapiro's *Mao's War against Nature* and Sigrid Schmalzer's *Red Revolution, Green Revolution* have discussed agriculture and animal husbandry in the People's Republic of China (PRC), but the pivotal period of Republican China remains understudied. My paper addresses this gap: I analyse the emerging awareness of animal welfare, health, and companionship as China modernized in the early 20th century. More specifically, this paper argues that while the concept of caring for nonhuman animals gained prominence in the Republic period, the trend was subsequently reversed as concepts of labour and human agency took priority over nonhuman life in the PRC. My research draws on original archival research that I conducted at the No. 2 Historical Archive in Nanjing, China, where I analysed Republican-era government documents on the management of farm animals. To give a thick description of human-nonhuman interactions on the personal scale, I also examine writings by modern Chinese authors such as Lu Xun who wrote about

new ways of relating to animals. This paper shows how the categories of "livestock" and "wild animals" changed dramatically to make space for "animal companions" in early 20th-century China.

Panel 2: Conceptual Considerations

*Whitfield, Susan (University of East Anglia)*

## The Horse in China: Always the Other?

Images of the North Korean President, Kim Jong-un, astride a white horse on the slopes of sacred Mount Baekje encapsulate many aspects of the role of the horse along the Silk Roads, most strikingly as a symbol of the ruler's power. But while President Kim was happy to be seen in this role, joining fellow dictators across Eurasia from Putin to Berdymukhamedov, and royals from Britain to Japan, it is difficult to imagine Chairman Xi Jinping on horseback. Nor does he not show any interest in the many horses presented to him as diplomatic gifts. In this he differs from formers rulers of China, such as Tang Taizong and Xuanzong, who actively sought horses from afar, especially as horse breeding was largely unsuccessful on the north China plains. They also commissioned artists to portray their favourite mounts, although not as portraits with themselves.

Identification in the 20th century of the selenium-poor soil stretching across a band of China provides an explanation for why horse-breeding was unsuccessful but does it answer the question as to why the horse seemed to have remained the 'other' in the cultures of the Chinese plains?

Keynote speech

*Xie Zhuolun (Princeton University)*

## Coming to Terms with the "Demonized Other": Animals and Animal Spirits in the Visual Narrative of a *Soushan tu* Painting

*Soushan tu* (literally "painting of a search in the mountains") is a Chinese narrative painting tradition that derives its name from a series of dynamic vignettes depicting a group of ferocious-looking goblin-soldiers capturing and expelling animal spirits under the command of a deity. The rhythmic fighting scenes, animated by the vivid portrayal of the goblins' muscular physiques and the animal spirits' resistance or suffering, contribute to *soushan tu*'s enduring appeal for historical and modern viewers alike. Previous scholarship has long understood this painting tradition from the perspective of sanctioned human violence toward animals in premodern China, arguing that the paintings pictorialize apotropaic activities carried out to pacify the animal spirits – the dangerous, demonized other, sometimes depicted in the disguise of half-humans. Due to early historical records of imperial viewership of *soushan tu* and the iconographical element of a commanding deity, these paintings have

also been interpreted as celebrating the demon-quelling power of the commander, symbolizing the imperial court.

This paper examines one little studied *soushan tu* painting dated to the Ming era (1368–1644). Through iconographical analysis, the paper demonstrates how the painting constructs a visual narrative that departs from the traditional interpretation and instead invites a sympathetic response to the suffering of the animals and animal spirits being hunted. This paper thus demonstrates the multiplicity of ways by which premodern painters pictorialized human and non-human relationships in the *soushan tu* tradition. In addition, through a combined reading of both the painting and its colophon, this paper shows the diverse ways painters and viewers negotiated such tensions and relationships in premodern Chinese visual culture.

Online Panel

*Yokoyama Kayo (Peking University)*

## Animals as Vessels of Human Ideologies: Wartime Animal Protection in Japan and China

In modern Japan and China, animal welfare movements often reflected societal desires and ideologies rather than focusing solely on animal protection. This tendency became particularly evident during wartime. In Japan, the movement began in 1902 with the establishment of the "Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals," advocating modernization and civilization through animal welfare. Along with the "Japan Humane Society" founded in 1914, it led pre-war animal protection efforts. However, from the 1930s, the rise of militarism distorted the movement, shifting its focus toward "military animals." Government-led propaganda events, such as the "Military Horse Festival," glorified animals aiding the war effort. Even Hiroi Tatsutaro, a pioneer of Japanese animal welfare, supported militaristic propaganda. While animals deemed useful for war were celebrated, companion animals like dogs and cats were devalued as "useless" and subjected to mass killings under the guise of "donations to the Emperor."

In contrast, in China, animals symbolised national identity and resistance against Japanese aggression. The "China Animal Protection Society," established in 1934, was the first Chinese-led animal welfare organization. Lü Bicheng, a prominent advocate of animal protection, linked the movement to national salvation. Feng Zikai, the author of *Paintings for the Preservation of Life*, promoted animal welfare from an anti-Japanese perspective. Soong Ai-ling drew parallels between the plight of pandas, native to southwestern China, and the suffering of Chinese people displaced to the region by Japanese invasion. However, as Feng Zikai noted, animal protection was ultimately a "means" to achieve peace and national salvation, not an end in itself.

This study examines how animal welfare movements in wartime Japan and China were transformed to reflect their respective roles as aggressor and victim. It highlights how animals were instrumentalized as vessels for human ideologies, overshadowing their intrinsic value and the original aims of animal welfare.

Panel 5: Animals as Same/Other in Times of Crisis

*Zhao, Audrey Ke (University of California)*

## From Singing Insects to Fierce Warriors: Crickets and Human-Animal Relations in Late Imperial China

My paper examines the cultural transformation of crickets in Chinese history, from their ancient identity as "grass chickens" (*shaji* 莎雞) to medieval "singing insects" (*mingchong* 鳴蟲), and finally to their role as "fierce warriors" (*mengjiang* 猛將) in the hands of both elites and commoners during the late imperial period. Through this transformation, my study reveals how crickets served as a critical lens for understanding the dynamic interplay between material objects (*jingwu* 景物) and human affairs (*renshi* 人事) in Chinese cultural history, while challenging traditional boundaries between human and animal domains. My research demonstrates that cricket culture, particularly cricket fighting, was intrinsically connected to the broader social transformations of the Ming-Qing empire, especially the shift from rural to urban life. By examining how crickets transitioned from being passive objects of poetic appreciation to active participants in human social networks, my study explores questions of animal agency and the porousness of species boundaries. The complex emotional investments humans made in their fighting crickets – from pride and admiration to empathy and attachment – reveal how these insects became more than mere entertainment, but rather actors who shaped human perceptions and behaviours. Drawing from diverse sources including classical poetry, historical records, material artifacts, and visual representations, I argue that the world of merry-making (*youle shijie* 游樂世界) surrounding cricket fighting was a crucial site where human-animal relationships were negotiated and redefined. My case study demonstrates how the boundaries between human and animal categories in Chinese culture were far more fluid than traditional hierarchies might suggest, offering new insights into historical human-animal relations in East Asia.

Online Panel