

# Problems and Methods of Studying Chinese History

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MA Course, Second Term 2014/15, Thursdays, 10:30, Room 2405

Prof. Yuri Pines, Office hours Mondays 13-14, Room 6145

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The course focuses on research students who study traditional Chinese history (roughly pre—1900), but it may help also those engaged in history-related studies of modern China. It will introduce the students to research tools that will facilitate their studies, help them in selecting research topic, teach them how to contextualize their research in broader research trends, and prepare them for independent research work in China and in the West. In particular it will teach the students to a) deal with a variety of primary sources for Chinese history; b) navigate their way amid a great variety of these sources; c) understand basic research trends and different methodologies in Chinese and Western research of pre-modern Chinese history.

The course is divided into 3 parts: introduction, practical knowledge, and in-depth analysis of primary sources and their problems. The introductory part (lessons 1-3) focuses on secondary literature in different languages. The practical part (4-9) introduces various research tools aimed at facilitating our dealing with primary sources (dictionaries, concordances, etc). Lessons 10-13 introduce a variety of primary sources for studying Chinese history and their problematique.

Requirements: the students will have to present five exercises out of six demanded during the course. At the end of the course the advanced students are required to produce a brief introduction to major primary sources that they are planning to use in their own research, and to explain the problematique of these sources.

The primary source to this course is Endymion Wilkinson's *Chinese History: A New Manual* (Harvard 2013). The students are strongly advised to purchase this indispensable book via Amazon.com or alternative sites.

## A. Introductory Part

### 1. March 12

Introduction: Major fields of study of pre-modern Chinese history and their problems. How to start one's research? Basic research requirements (using proper primary sources, proper usage of secondary sources, and the like)

### 2. March 19

Introducing Western language sources: basic research trends and research fashions; research guides, manuals, databases, etc.

Required reading: Wilkinson, *Chinese History* 75.5, pp. 973-975; 76.1 (978-979); 76.4 (984-989), 45.1.1-45.1.2 (592-593), 45.2.1 (594) [henceforth only items are cited without the pp.##]

Harriet T. Zurndorfer, *China Bibliography* (Brill, 1995), 3-44 [Y5 DS 706 Z87]

### 3. April 16: Introducing Chinese and Japanese language sources: basic research trends and research fashions; on-line and off-line search; CNKI; Chinese library system, etc.

Required reading: Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 45.1.3-45.3, 75.1-75.4; 75.6-75.7; 76.2-76.3

Lothar von Falkenhausen, "The Regionalist Paradigm in Chinese Archeology," in Philip L. Kohl and Clara Facett, eds., *Nationalism, Politics and the Practice of Archeology* (Cambridge, 1995), 198-217 [CC 135 N38]

## B. Practical Part

4. April 30: Language and Dictionaries. Introducing Chinese and bilingual dictionaries. Characters 字, words 辭, and set phrases 成語. *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, and later dictionaries. Linguistic challenges and how to overcome them.

Required reading: Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, chapters 1-6 (esp. focus on chapters 2 and 6)

5. May 7: Names and Dates. Family and lineage name, personal names 名, appellatives 字, alternative names 號, posthumous names 諡; taboos 諱 and their historical importance. Different appellations and their importance. Biographies and biographic dictionaries. Dates: *ganzhi* 干支 calendar, and reign year slogans 年號. Date conversion.

Required reading: Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 7-9; 18-19.

6. May 14: Geography and its importance. Historical maps. Place names; administrative divisions; historical changes in topography and environment.

Required reading: Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 12-15 (recommended also 16).

7. May 21: Governance and officialdom. Offices, ranks, titles, and career evaluation. Dictionaries of official titles. Official communication. Weights and measures

Required reading: Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 17, 20; 42

8. May 28: Classics and citations. On-line and off-line concordances, and their problems. Identifying a citation and its intellectual context. Ways of canonization of different works. The importance of citation in Chinese traditional culture.

Required reading: Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 30 (esp. 30.6), 74.

9. June 4: Books and bibliographies. Book titles. Collectanea and encyclopedia. Locating a book and understanding its basic settings. The "Four Treasuries" 四庫 system.

Required reading: Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 69-73.

## C. Mastering Primary Sources

10. June 11: Methodological problems of dealing with primary sources: dating, authenticity, reliability. Textual corruptions and forgeries.

Required reading: Harold D. Roth, "Text and Edition in Early Chinese Philosophical Literature" *JAOS* 113.2 (1993): 214-27.

11. June 18: Primary Sources A: Dynastic Histories and other products of court historians. Chronological and topically arranged histories. Institutional histories

Required reading: Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 47-51 (recommended also 45-46).

12. June 25: Primary Sources B: paleography, archeology, and textual discoveries: from oracle bones and bronze inscription, through bamboo manuscripts to stele inscriptions and Dunhuang library.

Required reading: Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 55-58, 69.

13. (An additional lesson shall be added in May or June after consulting the students): Primary sources C: Private histories, *biji*; religious histories; foreign accounts of China (Turkic, Arab, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, European, etc.)

Required reading: Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 52-54, 29, 31, 27.8