

Xiaofei Tian:

Good afternoon everyone. I'm Tian Xiaofei. I'm professor of Chinese Literature at Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at Harvard. It is my honor and pleasure to chair this panel archival and private collection this afternoon. And before I introduce our panelists, I would like to just very briefly introduce the background of this panel.

Xiaofei Tian:

So the background of the panel is a special exhibition which is being held upstairs, and we welcome everybody to go upstairs after the panel to take a look at the exhibition. So this exhibition is of a selection of treasured items from the collection of The Za Library, Zashuguan, and from Harvard-YenQing Library. So my colleague Wilt Idema, and I worked with the librarians of The Za Library and Harvard-YenQing library in making these selections, and the support of the Fairbank Center made the exhibition possible.

Xiaofei Tian:

So what is Zashuguan. You'll hear all about it from the director of Zashuguan very shortly. But let me just say that it is the biggest privately owned library in mainland China that is open to public. So the library is primarily built upon the private collection of the man who launched Kongfuzi Jiushu Wang, which is believed it will be the world's largest online platform for the circulation of used books, old books, jiushu.

Xiaofei Tian:

So The Za Library was founded in 2015 with Mr Gao Xiaosong a very well known cultural figure serving as it's director. So it was Mr Gao Xiaosong who gave the library its name Za, a word that means miscellaneous multifarious, mixed or simply put eclectic. So the name I think really very well captures the spirit of this unique library, because its extensive collection has a very wide arrange of pre-modern to modern materials in both printed and manual script media.

Xiaofei Tian:

So there are, as you will see from the exhibition upstairs, there are Tang manuscript copies, song printed editions, Liao and Xixia printed sutras in Chinese and Tangut. Ming and Qing clan lineages and local gazetteers, which you will hear being discussed by Professor Michael Szonyi shortly. There are autographs by prominent late Qing and early Republican personages, and a very large trove of popular materials from the late nineteenth through early twentieth century. And the popular material found in this last category, these were not traditionally widely sought by private collectors or public libraries.

Xiaofei Tian:

So these materials are really... To me, I think is really one of the major highlights of The Za Library, they're juxtaposed with the writings of the highest political and cultural elite of the day. So these materials from the lower strata of the literate society gave us a very good sense of the multifariousness Za of social life in China during a period of turmoil and change.

Xiaofei Tian:

So along with choice selection of the other material, the collection of the popular materials is featured most prominently in this exhibition, and the Harvard librarians have also made available a small selection from the very vast collection of the Harvard-Yenching Library as accompaniment and a Archival and Private Collection in Modern China (Completed 01/18/20) Page 1 of 22  
Transcript by [Rev.com](#)

compliment of The Za library materials on display. So the joint exhibition is designed to give the audience a taste. Just a small taste of these two really excellent library collections.

Xiaofei Tian:

They also will offer a glimpse into the diverse social reality in Chinese history and they prompt us to reflect on the nature and the significance of archival and private collection in modern China. And that is the theme of this panel today. So we have on our panel four speakers today. We have Mr Gao Xiaosong himself and who really needs no introduction to the people in this room.

Xiaofei Tian:

His many accomplishments include being the Director of The Zashuguan, and who has also opened several libraries throughout China. And that's really a great enterprise and a great thing to do. And we have Riley Brett-Roche, PhD candidate in history from Stanford University. And Riley spent the last year in China as a Mellon International Dissertation Research Fellow working on a dissertation and I believe a future book on modern China's archives.

Xiaofei Tian:

And we have Katherine Alexander who teaches Chinese Literature at University of Colorado, and a scholar of Baojuan. So she will share her insights about Baojuan and the popular material, the Baojuan is particularly kind of well featured in the exhibition and in the collection of the Zashuguan.

Xiaofei Tian:

And last but not least, we have professor Michael Szonyi who is Frank Wen-Hsiung Wu Memorial Professor of Chinese history, and the director of Fairbank center for Chinese Studies at Harvard. So I want to just take the opportunity thank Michael, and the Fairbank Center as well as The Za Library and the Harvard-YenQing Library for their support of this project. And I want to give a special note of thanks to the librarians Mr. Ma Xiao-he, Ms. Annie Wang, and Ms. Sharon Yang, and also Ms. Xiao Ge From the Zashuguan, and also to the very talented staff at the Fairbank Center, Mark Grady and James Evans. So thank you very much for all your help to make this event possible. So now I want to turn it over to our panelists. So first let us welcome Mr. Gao Xiaosong the Zashuguan guanzhang.

Gao Xiaosong:

Thank you Xiaofei. Thank you Michael. Thank you everybody. Xiaofei already said 90% of my lines, so almost everything. Where's the remote control? Okay. Actually last year I did a pretty long presentation of Zashuguan in East Asia Language and civilization Department, so I don't want to repeat the whole thing. It's a very long stuff. 50 pages of this PPT.

Gao Xiaosong:

So today I just want to change the angle from content side to the resource talking about kongfuzi.com First I'd love to read this in Chinese. I can't translate this to English. [Foreign language 00:08:15] C to C market place [foreign language 00:10:28] consumer to consumer. [Foreign language 00:10:29] B to C [foreign language 00:10:38] Amazon [foreign language 00:10:39] C to C [foreign language 00:10:46] market place [foreign language 00:10:52] sponsor [foreign language 00:10:53] The GMV.

Gao Xiaosong:

Online GMV is kind of like 800 Million Airbnb [foreign language 00:10:55] Kong Fuzi can charge like 1.5% of every transaction. [Foreign language 00:11:55] This one dominant market in China cover like more than 90% of the whole [foreign language 00:12:34] Transaction fee- [foreign language 00:12:56] Transaction fee- [foreign language 00:13:05] Okay. You are the number one dominant market, number one in this field. [Foreign language 00:14:21] We don't any profit. [Foreign language 00:14:28]

Riley:

Thank you.

Gao Xiaosong:

This is my water.

Riley:

Thank you. Am I going in the right... Is there a way to skip?

Gao Xiaosong:

I think you will have to.

Xiaofei Tian:

I think you will have to open this one. Sorry.

Riley:

No it's alright. I'm not very good at this either, so how do we-

Gao Xiaosong:

No don't touch that screen.

Riley:

Don't touch... Okay.

Gao Xiaosong:

That's the control panel.

Riley:

I guess while we deal with this, I would like to say thank you. I spent the past year in Beijing doing dissertation research. And so I was able go to the Zashuguan a couple of times. In fact, I spent many days there.

Riley:

And actually my sister came to visit me during the spring festival time, and she doesn't speak any Chinese, but she's a kindergarten teacher and we really enjoyed looking through some of the old comic books that you've collected. So it is a place that appeals to everyone.

Gao Xiaosong:

Thank you.

Riley:

Okay. All right. I'm delighted to be here to discuss The Za Library, the most pleasant sun-filled research center I worked in during my year of dissertation research. To contextualize the history of The Za Library, I offer an overview of a century of private collecting by focusing on three periods of turmoil in Beijing that reshaped the market and rare books and the history that we know today. The fall of the Qing empire, the Japanese occupation, and the cultural revolution. Here, private library is considered a collection of books... I'm sorry. Am I not loud enough?

Gao Xiaosong:

Yeah. Thank you.

Riley:

Okay. Here, private libraries considered a collection of books, historical materials and artifacts taking into account the social, political personal practices and fluctuating market conditions that led to this unique grouping. The study of private libraries cannot be divorced from the shifting role of the intellectual, but it should also be linked with the paper recyclers, grave diggers and clerks who found treasure in the trash.

Riley:

Waves of violence scattered the existing market and rare books and demolish cultural institutions that safeguarded sources allowing for competing claims and attempts to reconstitute China. In all three sections, I highlight creative efforts to collecting Beijing under the constraints of censorship and violence. Why focus on collecting? Because the recycling of private into public and back again has real consequences for understanding of Chinese history.

Riley:

We must consider what China is being collected and how this changes over time. A hopeful, yet humbling view of history as a constant project emerges as bibliophiles go about their work in the chaos. Why focus on collecting in what is now known as Beijing? Because in Beijing, the relationship between potential narratives and political narratives is constantly policed, creating a potent anxiety over possibilities.

Riley:

Geographically, this history of bibliophiles is centered on Leo Lee Chang or the curios district as it's labeled on this 1936 map by Frank Don. Here, I don't know where the pointer is, but here's the Curio District, and I just like to point out that it's at the confluence of some really important cultural centers just South of the forbidden city, close to the embassy district delegation area, and near the traditional end of the Silk Route near the Ox Street Mosque, which you'll see in the corner down there.

Riley:

After the fall of the Qing in 1912, the debate over securing the historical materials of the forbidden city for the people best illustrates the precarity of this project to make public what was once private. The Imperial library was an archive of historical documents, depository of literature and repository of relics. Safeguarding this collection and making it accessible was tied to the legitimacy of the new political order collectors watch the fumbling attempts of various warlord regimes and the Kuomintang with frustration.

Riley:

Lu Xun was an avid bibliophile who adored Leo Lee Chung. In 1916, he walked down that winding lane more than 80 times often on social trips with other reformers like Hu Shih who called for the abolition of Chinese characters, even as he expanded an impressive collection of ancient documents. It was a cosmopolitan market in 1913, the year before he was appointed the director of the New Qing History Museum founded by Yuan Shikai.

Riley:

Bibliophile Zhou Jiaoxiang recorded purchases in his journal including stone rubbings from Shaanxi a folio depicting flowers in Chengdu, and Beijing drum songbooks like some that you'll see upstairs. Regulars noted the sale of documents from the forbidden city picked over the plunder of archeological sites and debated the authenticity of recent purchases in a market of wash and fakes.

Riley:

In 1914 Joe wrote, "If antiquities are not collected, then they can't be passed down. If antiquities are not collected with care, then they're easily lost." And he advocated for increased investment in maintaining cultural art objects. Progress was too slow. In an article published in December of 1927, Lu Xun concluded, "Chinese public things are not easy to protect. If the authority is a layman, he makes things worse. If he is an expert, he steals things. In fact, it's not just a problem for books or antiques."

Riley:

What was the role of bibliophiles under such conditions? It was to bear witness by collecting and commenting. Despair over the dispersal of precious historical materials, generated dramatic plans for reform and more immediate efforts to define and secure cultural patrimony. These private efforts, informed visions of what China was and could be. And here the photographs above is of porters moving the Qing couple documents in the late 1920s to libraries around Beijing, including Beida and museums and other cultural institutions.

Riley:

No surprise that some of these fell off and ended up for sale in markets and Liulichang and bookstores there. They were purchased by Beijing bibliophiles, including Luo Jianyu but also foreign collectors. The Japanese military was responsible for the destruction of private libraries through strategic bombings and organized lootings. Specialized units in the army prepared for the invasion by reading through catalogs of library, museum and private collections.

Riley:

One 1949 report submitted to the Far Eastern Commission, commented on the situation in Suzhou, which had parallels with Beijing. They first looked for cultural objects. Next, they searched for imported articles of value such as cameras, radios, refrigerators, pianos and the like. And then personal effects

and household belongings. An outcome of such raids were the new library is built in occupied China, like the modern science library in Beijing.

Riley:

The occupation also funded indexing and cataloging projects, including an ambitious attempt to gather and re-publish the Qing Dynasty's complete library in four sections, the Siku Quanshu. In Beijing, new laws and regulations censored materials encourage the study and use of Japanese, where an occupation, reshaped the marketplace and rare books. The number of bookstores in Beijing increased from 40 in 1931, to 151 in 1949.

Riley:

As books became cheaper, doctors, teachers and officials of all stripes began collections. Increasingly bibliophiles focused on current affairs rather than the distant past and started gathering ephemera. For example, bookseller, Liu Dawen nicknamed the magazine King Zazhi Dawang told his son about rescue missions to trash piles outside of the Chongwen gate and his risky strategy of hiding his finds behind acceptable titles.

Riley:

For this generation, personal passion and political conditions motivated collecting, whether in support or in spite of a variety of national narratives. Photographs suggests that Leo Lee Chung continued to prosper under the occupation, recalling his experience as an apprentice bookseller, Lei Mengcui wrote, "In the old society, booksellers were not righteous and booksellers who specialized in serving customers of foreign countries where even more shameful."

Riley:

Lee worked for a bookstore that sourced materials for Japanese research projects in rural China. During the occupation he also strategically amassed collection catalogs, and under the people's Republic of China, Lee relied on these sources to advise the cultural relics committee on projects to find scattered archives, books and manuscripts. The first two photographs you see here are from... They're propaganda photographs from the North China Railway Collection recently digitized by Kyoto University.

Riley:

It's an amazing collection of images from occupied China, we cannot find them anywhere else. And the first is of a book market, an outdoor book market in Beijing. The second is of the children's reading room in the modern science library. And the third image here is the cover of a magazine that Leo Darwin, according to his son, collected Dongfang Zazhi Eastern Miscellany, one of the magazines that was banned under the Japanese occupation.

Riley:

In the people's Republic of China, collecting was justified by utility to the revolution, and professors, publishers and cadres affiliated with cultural affairs units had an easier time building collections. Others sold their books to the new China bookstore Xinhua shudian or China bookstore Zhongguo shudian and 14 large collections were donated to the National Library in 1950 alone.

Riley:

We are all familiar with Mao Zedong personal library from photographs of his meeting with President Nixon. And here you'll see it in the background from where there's... The books are laid horizontally with flaps hanging down to let you know what's there. I'm sorry, but building private collections was a passion for many elite cadres. One example was Mao's secretary Tian Jiaying born in Sichuan, at 16 Tian made his way to Yan'an and joined the party in 1938.

Riley:

Tian was an early casualty of the Cultural Revolution committing suicide on May 23rd, 1966 the day after he was accused of falsifying Mao's writings and his home was raided by red guards. His collection was likely one of the reasons he was persecuted. By 1960 he had thousands of books and archival materials such as diaries, letters and calligraphy samples of late Qing reformers, a special interest as foreign constitutions.

Riley:

Tian's carefully stamped collection was sealed off in Zhongnanhai until he was rehabilitated in the 1980s when portions of it were returned to his wife and daughters. Many of today's bibliophiles got their start during the cultural revolution, red guards were enthusiastic collectors, exchanging enamel pins and bowls of revolutionary soil. In interviews, I heard stories of red guards who quietly pocketed books from paper recycling piles.

Riley:

These same red guards may have been among the 700 to 800 men and women who descended on the China bookstore Liulichang when it reopened on May 10th, 1972. A report to the revolutionary municipal council submitted at the end of its first month described subsections of these readers, including careful and hilarious profiles of foreigners. Today, a member of the National Cultural Relics Appraisal Committee, Yang Changkai recalled it was still the middle of the cultural revolution and some people had lingering fears from the destroyed fort old's campaign earlier in the cultural revolution.

Riley:

They carefully observed from the sidelines and didn't dare meddle. I found the courage to do the best I could to take advantage of the opportunity for the low price of three to five Yuan a book I purchased hundreds of books and more than 2000 thread bound books. Of these the great majority were from the Qing dynasty and printed using woodblocks. Among them were dozens of rare additions and dozens of precious finds.

Riley:

Now retired with expendable incomes. Some former red guards have curated private collections and today are among the most enthusiastic advocates for public museums to witness the history of modern China. Huge profits from the sale of historical documents to private collectors returns us to the question of access. In a blog post, archivist Guo Hongjie protested the 2012 sale of a portion of Liang Qichao's personal archive by Beijing Auction House.

Riley:

Woo concluded, "Archive administrators at all levels have a role to play in safeguarding the archives law and effectively protecting scattered archives that have preservation value for the nation and society. In

such a competitive market, scholars have increasingly turned to grassroots sources, mingjian lishi dangan, the personal files, diaries and letters of everyday people that are collected by paper recyclers sold at free markets and then resold to scholars."

Riley:

Within the past decade, this market too has moved online into auction house and is regulated by the state. Under censorship, the logic of the market confronts the political narrative of state function history and sparks fly. Materials that failed to conform are rare and desirable. Eventually the source base is incorporated, erased, or stored away. And the cycle continues.

Riley:

Private collections serve as a reservoir of memories to affect public possibilities. If you're interested in history's future, find a paper recycler or talk to his friend who collects discarded floppy disks and DVDs. Thanks very much.

Michael Szonyi:

All right. Thank you very much everyone for coming. I'm afraid that I will have to take a couple of minutes at the beginning to say a few more thank yous. The relationship between the Fairbank Center, and the Zashuguan has been enormously productive. And I want to just repeat Professor Tian's thanks to the people who have made that possible. In particular the Guanzhang Xiaosong, also the staff at the Zashuguan including Xiao Ge, who came all the way from Beijing to help us with the exhibition upstairs.

Michael Szonyi:

I want to thank Professor Tian Xiaofei and Wilt Idema who have really done the lion's share of the work at our end in putting together today's event and the information around the exhibition. I also want to thank the staff of Harvard-Yenching Library Ma Xiaohe, Sharon Yang, for their hard work integrating the treasures of the two collections in the wonderful exhibit upstairs. And I also have to thank the extraordinary team at the Fairbank Center who have really worked so hard putting together this exhibition.

Michael Szonyi:

So thank you all. I really appreciate it. It's a wonderful example of collaboration and a wonderful exhibit. So I thought I would use my remarks today to reflect a little bit on one particular genre in the Zashuguan, which is genealogies zhapu or zhupu or zhonghu. There are a lot of hodie, lots of different terms in Chinese. And there are some wonderful zhapu, in the Zashuguan I guess some of which were obtained through Kong Fuzi.

Michael Szonyi:

And to me it may seem strange to have what seems like a private family document, an internal family document entering the realm of commercialization, and then entering into a private library that is accessible to the public. There are still many parts of China today where they practice the custom of fenghu, the ceiling of the genealogy, because the genealogy is an important document of a family history. It's an important ritual text.

Michael Szonyi:



And so in some parts of China, it's not even allowed to be seen. The poo is literally... The genealogy is literally sealed never to be shown, except on very special ritual occasions. And so the fact that this interacts with a lively commercial market is to me just to kind of interesting phenomenon. I also am quite struck. I haven't purchased books on Kong Fuzi, but it's good to know that even if you're spending 80,000 Yuan, you can get kuaidi for only one extra kuai. If I were...

Michael Szonyi:

And this is why I'm not a business person because I might throw in the kuaidi but not Kong Fuzi. Anyways, so genealogies actually have occupied an ambiguous and interesting place between public and private for millennia in China. And that's really what got me thinking about this question is that this seems rather jarring, but the reality is that genealogies have from their very beginnings, been both public and private and circulated between the public and the private and actually had an interesting commercial element as well, which I'll get to in a minute.

Michael Szonyi:

So unlike the other major genre that we're going to hear about today, Baojuan or precious volumes, genealogies are a very ancient genre in China. Indeed, some of the earliest surviving texts in the Chinese language are genealogical. All right. And so I suppose that in some ways you might argue that genealogies are the oldest continuous. We hear a lot in China about the oldest continuous tradition in China. But genealogies are probably the oldest continuous literary genre, because we have them from the very beginning.

Michael Szonyi:

When we don't write in Baojuan when anymore, we don't generally ask for predictions about rain, but people still continue their genealogies. For the early Imperial period from the Han to the Tang and into towards the end of Tang, genealogical records of families eligible to hold office were an important genre that was similarly both public and private, because being recorded in these genealogies indicated one's eligibility to hold political... To hold whole Imperial office, which meant that the Imperial government actually managed their maintenance.

Michael Szonyi:

No extent genealogies from Han Tang are known to exist. But we are able to reconstruct portions of them in fragments. One of the interesting things about this phase in genealogical history is that already in this period people were counterfeiting and faking and making, and trying to put in information that didn't belong as Professor Tian details in her account of Liang history. We see from the... This must be early sixth century, Liang Shu?

Xiaofei Tian:

Liang Shu-

Michael Szonyi:

It was the seventh century. Early seventh century. Well, a long time ago.

Xiaofei Tian:

Sixth century.

Michael Szonyi:

Sixth century. A long... There are accounts of people interfering with the compilation of genealogies for very practical reasons. And this is something that continues throughout the succeeding century, although it's not something I'm going to talk about very much. This phase in the history of genealogy comes to an end with the collapse of the Imperial... The systems of hereditary office holding families.

Michael Szonyi:

But then in the song under the influence of Neo Confucian thinkers like Ouyang Xiu and Su Shi and Zhu Xi a new form of genealogy emerges. And it then spreads over the last 1,000 years of Chinese history enormously widely. And although we think of genealogies as perhaps being especially common in Southern China in this period, there actually can be found virtually everywhere.

Michael Szonyi:

And this has led me to make the somewhat polemical claim, but I think it's true in my 2017 book that in terms of sheer numbers, in purely quantitative terms genealogies are the greatest surviving source for Chinese history in Ming and Qing times. The cultural evolution of course is a very dramatic and devastating period for lineage organization in general in China, and genealogies in particular as the kind of physical reflection of the clan, or the lineage, millions of genealogies are destroyed.

Michael Szonyi:

Which meant that when I began my studies of China in the '80s, so just coming out of the cultural revolution, the general sense was that this private document no longer existed privately, that all genealogies were held in libraries, mostly research libraries outside of China. In particular the Mormon family history society in Salt Lake city was thought to have the largest collection of Chinese genealogies at the time.

Michael Szonyi:

Interestingly and this touches... Relates in ways I wasn't expecting to Riley's presentation. Interestingly many genealogies turned out were preserved during the cultural revolution by being deposited in a repository. It's not necessarily the libraries, because they were not typically seen as books worthy of collection, but in archives and I suspect often by cultural cadres who were hoping to allow genealogies to survive the devastation, but also sometimes by investigators and red guards and public security officials who used the genealogies as evidence of the perfidy of the exploiting classes.

Michael Szonyi:

But I think that... The main thing I want to say is actually that despite our expectation or our belief at that time that the genealogical tradition was over and the private genealogies in China had disappeared, huge numbers it turned out, survived. And anyone who does genealogical collection as I do in rural China, will encounter stories of the heroic efforts of ordinary people to preserve their family genealogies as tremendously important private documents that they now share with scholars and researchers and make public in a new way.

Michael Szonyi:

The revival of geneal... So I'll just say a couple of words about the revival of genealogical compilation in contemporary China. This is related to, but distinct from, the overall revival of lineage activities in China. Archival and Private Collection in Modern China (Completed 01/18/20) Page 10 of 22  
Transcript by [Rev.com](#)

The revival of lineage compilation in China goes through waves, and varies by region. But I think it's safe to say that it's happening virtually everywhere across China, and across China you find elderly villagers organizing themselves into yantaozhui to prepare the compilation of the... Or the recompilation of their lineage genealogy.

Michael Szonyi:

The passion and the devotion that people in villages that I've encountered all across China exhibit towards this phenomenon is truly inspiring. In many cases, these are based on surviving genealogies. And I thought I would just say one quick word about the scale of survivals. I mentioned the moving stories of people hiding their genealogies and bringing them out.

Michael Szonyi:

The largest current catalog of pre-modern genealogies is the catalog of the Shanghai Municipal Library, which is also the largest repository of genealogies, pre-modern genealogies in China. The library holds about 10 to 20,000 genealogies depending on how you define the term. The catalog contains about 40,000 genealogies. By my estimate, the number of catalog genealogies is exceeded by the number of actual genealogies, probably by at least two orders of magnitude.

Michael Szonyi:

That is to say library catalogs have records of tens of thousands of genealogies, but the numbers of surviving genealogies is actually certainly in the millions, and probably in the tens of millions. When I do collecting trips in China, I obviously start with the Shanghai catalog. And it's not unusual to go to a County with two or three entries in the Shanghai catalog and within a few weeks to have located hundreds and sometimes several hundreds of genealogies.

Michael Szonyi:

So there's an extraordinary resource inherited from the past, but to turn back to the interest in the present, I mentioned already the great interest in recompiling genealogies. My former student leader Lin Renyuan who now teaches at, or works at Academia Sinica has actually studied families of hereditary genealogists. So these are professional genealogists who began their business in the 18th century of compiling genealogies on behalf of other families, and that hereditary tradition, which we would have thought was completely lost, has now been revived. And these genealogists are once again passing on their family traditions and traveling to rural China.

Michael Szonyi:

Their methods are quite extraordinary. They go into the Hills and record what's on the tombstones and they go into the ancestral halls and record what's on the ancestral tablets and produce genealogies for interested... For the people who hire them. And then of course, the other extraordinary aspect of genealogical compilation in contemporary China is online genealogy which is a... And many genealogies now exist. I hope that I actually... So yes, it is an image of a geology being compiled online and lots of genealogies now exist only online.

Michael Szonyi:

So let me just close with a couple of thoughts about what the opportunities and challenges that this presents for scholarship. I'm speaking here of the phenomenon of genealogical compilation circulation

transmission more generally. The first and most obvious question for us as scholars is why is it happening? That is to say, why is the tracing of descent seen as socially productive in contemporary China? I think this is something that few of us would have expected.

Michael Szonyi:

For one thing the tracing of dissent across family lines has come under attack by virtually every political regime that has governed China since the late 19th century. So the Qing tried to stamp it out. The Republic tried to stamp it out. The PRC tried to stamp it out both in the Maoist era and in the early Reform era, there's a famous intervention by Hu Yaobang about how bad genealogies are, and how we should really stamp them out.

Michael Szonyi:

So it's kind of an interesting phenomenon and one of many examples of how Chinese people resist what the political regime that governs them tells them to do. And what might simply look at it as the current interest in genealogical compilation as a kind of cultural survival. That's not typically something, an explanation that historians find very satisfying, because we want to know why it survives and how it's changed over time.

Michael Szonyi:

Some people have argued that it is an expression of the general sense of spiritual malaise that is occurring in China today. That we can look at genealogical compilation as a kind of something comparable to the explosion of Christianity, the explosion of new religions, the reappearance of old religions, that this is a product of a general sense of uneasiness with China's headlong rush into global capitalism.

Michael Szonyi:

A third set of explanations focus on the concrete benefits of knowing your kin. There's a lot of research that shows that there is a real material benefit. A network benefit in all kinds of ways in terms of local government, in terms of entrepreneurship, in terms of public goods provision. And so there is an argument that says that people do this because they see which side of where their bread is buttered and this has material benefits.

Michael Szonyi:

I don't have an answer, but it's certainly an intriguing historical question. I talked a couple of times about the older villagers that I encounter who are devoting their retirement years to compiling their family genealogy. But equally interesting of course, are the young people, sometimes people living in the city away from the village for whom the compilation of their genealogy is a great source of interest and attention and pride.

Michael Szonyi:

The rush to commodification embodied by Kong Fuzi, but to the benefit of the Zashuguan, well certainly to be... Well it certainly had some very positive impacts. Has had some more negative concern, more negative consequences for scholarship. These are actually... This is a photograph taken in an ancestral hall. Not actually... Oh, that is actually a genealogy in the back there.

Michael Szonyi:

Some of the students in this room joined me this summer on a trip to the Tong Tai in Northwestern Fujian where we are gathering an enormous collection of local documents including genealogies. And basically the big challenge and the big urgency is that we actually have to get at them before the antique dealers do, because the conditions that will facilitate research depend on us being able to associate these books with the places that produce them. And of course, once they are on Kong Fuzi that is lost. There is a-

Gao Xiaosong:

Well you cannot pay 25 Yuan too.

Michael Szonyi:

Don't matter. I would pay more, but it's... So this is a real concern. The other thing that is extraordinary and I'm curious how Kong Fuzi happens to do this is... So one of the kinds of materials that I'm particularly interested in are land deeds. These are some students perhaps... Some students in this room, actually show us may be your hands, I can't remember whose hands those are, are scanning these deeds, and there's a market in Chinese for all kinds of antiques.

Michael Szonyi:

I would not have thought land deeds... All land deeds saying that in... This is... I can't even read what... Saying that in the mid Qing, this piece of land was sold from this guy to that guy. There's actually a market for that in China today, which raises to my amazement the renewed danger of counterfeiting. This is a particular problem in one of the sort of centers of Chinese local documents, which is Huizhou, and you really can't be sure that a deed, or a genealogy, or any document from Huizhou that you see.

Michael Szonyi:

I'm sure Kong Fuzi has all kinds of methods to guarantee authenticity. So I won't say where, but certainly this is a new challenge. Interestingly, so one of the things that people always ask me when they learn that I studied genealogies is, "How do you know they're true? How do you know they're not counterfeited?" And of course I won't get into this in much detail, but actually they're interesting to me as a historian regardless.

Michael Szonyi:

And I don't actually care in any sense whether the line of begat, he begat, he begat, he begat actually corresponds to some biological relationship between human beings, which is what people ask that question are asking. I'm curious why these documents were produced, why they were important to people, why they circulate and indeed why faking them and counterfeiting them matters to people.

Michael Szonyi:

So in some ways well I'm cautioning about the danger of commercialization, in fact the issue of reliability doesn't actually matter to me very much as a scholar. And then the biggest question I guess is whether the Chinese genealogy has a future. That is to say, as I'm sure all of you in the room have seen photographs like these of the members of the household who are away represented by their empty chairs, and the members of the household present represented by the people as China becomes an

urban society with a few ties, or no ties to the rural communities that first produced the families of the lineage, whether shared interest...

Michael Szonyi:

Whether shared ancestry will continue to be socially meaningful for Chinese people is a really interesting question that I encourage you all to explore. Let me come back to the Zashuguan with some maybe somber closing comments. So it turns out that the process of reform and opening up in China faces reverses. Faces obstacles. Faces reverses in the political realm. Faces reverses in the economic realm. Faces reverses that we might not have expected.

Michael Szonyi:

Until quite recently I was fairly confident that we wouldn't face reverses in the academic realm. That the academic story would continue to be one of ongoing opening up, ongoing more and more interaction, free interaction both within China and between Chinese scholars and the rest of the world. Unfortunately, that's of course not happening. And we are seeing the closing of some freedoms that scholars used to enjoy.

Michael Szonyi:

These are of course much more serious. I mean they impact our research, but they are of course much more serious for Chinese scholars in China. That being said there are perhaps also new opportunities that new modes of preserving and circulating and sharing information like for Zashuguan present for which I'm very grateful. Thank you all.

Alexander:

Well that's it.

Michael Szonyi:

That was it?

Alexander:

Yup. Up against the blank slide.

Michael Szonyi:

I think I may have ruined it now.

Alexander:

Oh, you just closed PowerPoint.

Michael Szonyi:

I did. Sorry.

Alexander:

Let's reopen PowerPoint. It should be in one of the last open files.

Michael Szonyi:

Yep. That's it.

Alexander:

I don't know. Recent Alexander.

Michael Szonyi:

There we are. Sorry about that.

Alexander:

There's no worries.

Michael Szonyi:

I'll start it for you if you want to. Sorry about that.

Alexander:

No problem. Before anything else... And can you hear me first of all? Yes? Marvelous. Thank you. Before anything else, I want to express deep gratitude to Professor Xiaofei Tian for inviting me to take part in this panel discussion, and for her enthusiasm a few years ago when she introduced me to the Zashuguan, and the fantastic potential that it offers to my ongoing research.

Alexander:

So thank you Xiaofei for lighting the spark for me and thank you Gao Xiaosong for the valuable contributions to the preservation and study of under preserved popular texts that your direction at Zashuguan supports, thank you. In my allotted time today, I would like to first explain a bit how my research often is at odds with the priorities of mainstream library collections.

Alexander:

Then to illustrate this, I'll show a case study of one text that I've been working on lately Penggong Baojuan, and hopefully after that I've left myself enough time to close with some thoughts and some wonderings about how we can further address the kinds of exciting potentials that getting entangled in the Za parts of early modern Chinese book culture give us. And if not, I look forward to time in the Q & A and after the panel we can continue this conversation.

Alexander:

My research has its roots in one particular genre of popular religious performance texts called Baojuan, and I specifically work on Baojuan during the late Qing. Working closely with these Baojuan has then led me to ask questions about early modern Chinese popular literature much more broadly, particularly its producers, its consumers, its readers, its listeners, and the complex contexts in which popular genres contended for attention in all of the Za-ness.

Alexander:

In addition to entertaining their audiences Baojuan served vital religious functions not only in their performances, but also in their publication. To reprint a Baojuan was to make a performance of its own.

And so in working with these objects as serious objects of study, rather than dismissively as popular literature, I address issues in non elite vernacular literature.

Alexander:

And I consider questions about the goals of fiction and work out details about relationships between the literate and the illiterate. Because if we consider only the hyper literate elite readers of fiction and nonfiction, the *sida qishu*, and all of the big texts that we tend to think about in Chinese literature, we end up ignoring the majority of Chinese society who were illiterate listeners.

Alexander:

So then we can't apply the usual measures of literary excellence or take habitual approaches to unraveling webs of textual complexity within the stories themselves. We still have to disabuse ourselves of the notion that these were simple texts for simple folk. If anything, the artifacts of popular literature are instead nodes on a vast web of their own, where social complexities that frame their existence makes some simplistic readings of their contents actually irresponsible.

Alexander:

So I'm especially interested in my own research in how late Qing reformer Yuci outspokenly endorsed vernacular literature and the power wielded to affect its audiences in a period where most literati expressed disdain for these potentially obscene works. And I don't mean obscene necessarily in terms of their content, although some of them were obscene in that way too.

Alexander:

I mean, I've seen in the way that they were spread among these crowds of people all gathered round, men and women mixing, cellars in the background, ladies with their fans up there and somebody selling millet in the back. This is the *Za-ness* of the popular literary realm. So Yuci actually asked elites to form an uneasy alliance with popular literature in order to harness this destabilizing power for good. All is well and good there, but did anybody care? Was anybody actually listening?

Alexander:

So one way that I have worked out how to answer some of these questions involves reconstructing how you use texts. Many of them are in fact *Baojuan*. But he also wrote plays. He also wrote poetry collections for little boys, an encyclopedia of how to found your own morality association complete with the forms that you would need to use. To ask how these texts created out of his own idealistic fervor actually spread, or didn't during the final decades of the Qing and beyond.

Alexander:

And in order to do this, I had to find them and in order to find them, I have really had to dig. Although I believe that this will be easier when I get a chance to visit *Zashuguan*. Most library collections for understandable if unimaginative reasons focus on preserving texts with high cultural cachet. As Professor Wilt Idema mentioned in his lecture here last month, and the podcast is up on the Fairbank Center website, which is lovely. And if you weren't here to hear the lecture in person, I strongly recommend you go check it out.

Alexander:



Professor Wilt Idema mentioned that a lot of the collection practices of libraries in China come down to an arbitrary decision that's made about which text have youxue shuxing and meixue shuxing, right? So, while I have thankfully spent times in libraries with large collections of Baojuan, they're most often minimally cataloged at best, like by name and perhaps just the Qing dynasty. And they're cared for in such a way that can't even really be described as tough love as you can see by some of my photos here from a large collection of Baojuan.

Alexander:

In fact, years ago I remember watching with horror as a board college student employee at a large public library roughly handled a delicate, damaged Baojuan that I desperately needed photographed for my own research, and I wasn't allowed to photograph the text myself, so it had to be photocopied with each page that the student turned and smacked down on the copier, the book crumbled a little bit more.

Alexander:

That's the fate I fear of many Qing imprints that don't qualify for sunburn status, but get filed away as simple putong gujishu, right? Putong guji xianzhang shu. So we're now in the messy realm of the Za. So I hope that the following case study from one small aspect of my current research conserve to illustrate the case, both the difficulties of reconnecting those broken nodes that I mentioned thanks to mainstream archival practices and the potential impact that Zashuguan and other private collections have for my research and other people who work in these genres.

Alexander:

So I want to talk about Penggong Baojuan and I won't give you a super long summary of this Baojuan, but Penggong Baojuan is set before, during and after the Taiping War. It was compiled in 1853 and probably 1854. I have not personally seen extant additions before 1858. My research assistant, a lovely undergraduate named Remy, whose names you might see on some of these slides, found me an 1856 edition, which made me very happy last summer. But Penggong Baojuan is most likely written by Yuci, and it deals with the trauma of the war.

Alexander:

It talks about how people can avoid being caught up in the war, the fall of Nanjing itself and all of the various horrible sins that brought about the destruction in Nanjing and then imagines a utopia after the war. So Guanyin will save you, Penggong himself is up in heaven, cataloging all the sins of the people who are going to die in Nanjing and the people who can escape from Nanjing.

Alexander:

And then in the end, we can imagine a utopia where after everybody has converted and behaved better thanks to Pin hua bao juan and other texts that Yuci advertises in his own text, he's a shameless self promoter, that we can imagine a utopia in which everything is back to normal. Heaven has ended the Taiping War and we are at peace again in a Confucian Paradise.

Alexander:

When I begin working on Baojuan, anytime I look at any text I always refer to Cexi Lun's Zhongguo Baojun Zhoumu. And this is the authoritative catalog published in the late '90s that reflects previous

catalogs of Baojuan, but also catalogs from libraries. So these are not all books that Cexi Lun has seen himself, but they are what he collects in what he believes.

Alexander:

And I actually, I really appreciate you saying that this catalog, when you go to Shanghai library will usually tell you one or two books might exist. And then when you go out in the field, you discover how many more are out there. Because this is truly the case when we look at any kind of Baojuan. So Pengguo Baojuan, we have 22 entries here. In my archival research over the past few years, I have only been able to directly link Za's catalog entries with seven books that I have personally seen.

Alexander:

And so text doesn't matter here, but there are a lot of gaps in our understanding and there are a lot of texts that are actually hidden even within Za's own catalog. And I think I don't have time to give you an example of something from Harvard-Yenching, and Guotu. So I'm just going to skip ahead and if you really interested, we can talk about this example later, because I found something into Za's catalog that there's actually two additions of, one in Harvard-YenQing and the blocks were reused by similar donors and published again later in greater volume.

Alexander:

So what this does, this case study, it shows us that there's a decision making process that the Yu family went under where Yu Wangwei and Yumen Qianshi first published 150 volumes of this Baojuan and then later went back, right? Because this is Harvard's copy. This is Guotu's copy, later went back and published 200 more. Okay. So the blocks were used again, stuff like the standard cataloging doesn't account for these multiple imprints.

Alexander:

But due to the scant attention that many Chinese public libraries have, the 22 printed and manuscript versions of Penggong Nanjing records are really only a small fraction of the ones that existed. Well, I'm sure that many remained to be discovered in library collections. It's in private hands where I found curious and important additions to my edition list. This is my personal edition list that I've been working to reconstruct the publication history of Penggong Baojuan.

Alexander:

The ones in red are ones that are not in Za's catalog. The ones in orange are potentially in Za's catalog. The ones that were in light green but look vaguely yellow are the ones that I can clearly identify as in his catalog. And what is most important interesting to me is if we look here at the ones in blue, these are private collections, three of which I just learned are in Zashuguan, so now I definitely need to go. Thank you by the way, for preparing that spreadsheet for me. It was incredibly helpful, but you can also notice that I have a lot that I find on Kong Fuzi.

Alexander:

I have not bought them, but there are a lot of beautiful images and I've been able to do some serious research, thanks to Kong Fuzi's entries and the photographs that are posted there. One other thing I want to point out and then I will yield my time to Q and A and that is this issue of reconstructing the

publication history of this Baojuan, and every entry I add gives me another sense of the actual practical networks in which this Baojuan circulated.

Alexander:

Blue up here is wartime publications of the Baojuan. Green is postwar publications to show that the text had incredible traction even after the conflict that it was directly related to is over. Yellow indeterminate. Curiously, here we have a moment in 1858, and I need to go back and figure out what was happening during the Taiping War in 1858 that allowed for this much publication.

Alexander:

A moment in 1858 where I have four proven editions and there are likely more out there still, and where Zashuguan has given me new insight into this, is that my previous three 1858 editions were from Suzhou, Suzhou, and Zhangxi, and Zashuguan has one from Fujian from the same year.

Alexander:

So this text has traveled to an area far beyond the front-lines of the war in a very short period of time. Four years from the time where the text first came together all the way down in Fujian. Why? How? Does the text have prefaces? I need to know these things. So I don't have time to talk about what's next, but I think this is a good chance for the Q and A to begin. So I'm going to leave this slide up here.

Xiaofei Tian:

Sounds great.

Alexander:

Thank you everybody.

Xiaofei Tian:

Thank you. [crosstalk 01:12:30] Yeah. Okay. Thank you all for this wonderful really thought provoking presentations. So now we don't have a whole lot of time, so I'm just going to open the floor, and invite our audience to ask questions, comments, anything. Yes. Yes. Pass him the microphone.

Audience:

Just a couple of quick questions, one, professors only. Can you just comment quickly on given the problem about veracity of these documents, what's the role of kind of genetic research for the study of genealogy? [Foreign language 01:13:19]

Michael Szonyi:

You go first.

Gao Xiaosong:

Okay. [Foreign language 01:13:55] [crosstalk 01:17:34]

Michael Szonyi:

So I'm not actually aware of the use of genetic testing in the compilation of genealogies, but it's not something I particularly am watching for. So it may be happening, I'm just not aware of. But I think what I would say, one thing is that you can flip the question around and there is a great deal of interest in medical research and in public health, in making use of the enormous repository of genealogical information, as a way to produce new medical discoveries to track diseases through populations.

Michael Szonyi:

There are so many ways in which... Well Chinese big data is so much bigger, than other forms of big data. But there are certainly efforts being made to link medical research, and genealogy to produce new findings based on the longevity of the Chinese genealogical record.

Audience:

[Foreign language 01:18:46] private library [foreign language 01:18:47] political sensitive journals and materials [foreign language 01:20:00]

Gao Xiaosong:

[Foreign language 01:20:00] Machine learning, to deep learning, to AI technology. [Foreign language 01:20:04] Machine learning [foreign language 01:20:55].

Audience:

Yeah. I have two questions. One for Michael and then for Mr. Gao Xiaosong. Michael very quick question. What do you think are the educational functions of genealogy? Because you mentioned about the state and also the privates fair, and I just wonder that.

Audience:

Because private education, family education actually is a very important type of education for the Chinese people, particularly in the traditional era. So that's for you. And also I have a question for Mr. Gao Xiaosong, also about education, because we all know that you are not trained as a historian, but you are doing perfect job-

Gao Xiaosong:

Thank you.

Audience:

... in history. Yes. And you're collaborating with the best center history and also Chinese studies in the world. And actually you are trained as engineer, and then music and then movie. So what do you think you benefit most from your educational experience in China? Because my research focuses on higher education and educational studies. Yeah.

Michael Szonyi:

Well, I'm not sure whether your question is directed towards history or towards the present. We know that knowledge of the family was considered an important part of traditional education, that's why so many genealogies begin with the phrase guoyoushi jiaoyoupu. That is to say that... And that actually is to say that the knowledge of the Jia is as important as the knowledge of the Guo.

Michael Szonyi:

Much of the story of the 20th century has been to say that actually knowledge of the Guo is important and knowledge of the Jia is not. But certainly historically Jiapu were central to domestic education. I'm not really sure if your question was more about the contemporary situation. I don't really think that the genealogy plays an obvious educational role at present, but I suppose it depends on the direction that genealogy takes.

Michael Szonyi:

The traditional paragons of female virtue that are recorded in genealogies I don't think probably have much to tell young women in China today, but if the next generation of genealogies records the accomplishments in education, the accomplishments in business and in commerce and in government of young women, maybe the next generation of young girls will again look to the genealogy for models of behavior. And that really depends on what Chinese people do with their genealogy, which I don't know what their... I don't know what's next.

Gao Xiaosong:

Well, it's another side of the family education, because my family is like... Well you probably know they're all professors or PhD and they... Everybody train me like elite. Like intellectual, something like that. So in China, this kind of family will train you at least five things. History, that's a must.

Gao Xiaosong:

You have to know the history of the country, and the history of the cities, history of your family and the world. And qinqi shuohua. You go back to kind of like [foreign language 01:27:20] You have to learn liuyi and now qinqi shuohua history. So what I'm doing now is just monetize everything my family trained me. Thank you.

Xiaofei Tian:

Okay. We're going to take one more question. So yes.

Audience:

I think the first question will be asked to Mr. Gao Xiaosong. I'm just wondering when The Za Library digitized your collections, is like you will add punctuation by yourself or just un-punctuated?

Gao Xiaosong:

Well, we have [foreign language 01:28:03] well actually he's the... I'm more like the jixiangwu. I'm like Chief Marketing Officer of that whole thing. So I'm doing like running around promote Zashuguan and to Harvard to all those kinds of scholars and to the society and that's my job.

Gao Xiaosong:

But first I have some point of view from... But I put most of my point of view into my xiaoshuguan. My library is in Hangzhou, Nanjing, and Beijing. That's my collection.

Audience:

I think the second half of my question would be for a scholarly usage who's like... For a scholar, whose native language is not Chinese. It's like you prefer the punctuated primary source or un-punctuated, because Professor Szonyi know how much extra time we spend on the un-punctuated version, and how many problems where it caused like generated from the punctuated version of primary stories.

Michael Szonyi:

He knows what I think.

Alexander:

I would prefer to stick with un-punctuated. I've worked with sources where the punctuation is very clearly wrong, and it has thrown me off so often. I was laughing a little bit, because I've been working with my grad students on Ming-Qing practices and we've been talking a bit about when were punctuated editions produced versus non punctuated editions.

Alexander:

And of course the mark of elite scholarship is to be able to read the non punctuated edition, so to say. Just sort of imagining late Ming and early Qing literati turning over in their graves as we add the punctuation back in for mass dissemination in the present day. But Riley, please go ahead.

Riley:

I guess to offer a perspective looking at more, I guess the past 30 or 40 years. Punctuation offers a lot of opportunity for creativity and a lot of opportunity for messages to be read in a variety of ways. And certainly there are plenty of Chinese authors. I guess you'll see in newspapers sometimes or even on Weixin.

Riley:

People will write something that has a paragraph, or a period at the end, but if you read it vertically, it means something entirely different. Diagonally, something entirely different. I mean, this is something we see continuously over Chinese history. So punctuation is just another opportunity for thinking, right?

Audience:

I'll just say one quick word, which is that as Yang Yunhui knows in my class, I sometimes give students the option and Yunhui always chooses the unpunctuated text. And so when you are looking to hire a punctuator, ta zui lihai.

Gao Xiaosong:

Okay.

Xiaofei Tian:

Okay. Thank you. Thank you all very much. I do want to remind the audience, we have a reception upstairs and also the wonderful treasured items from the Zashuguan from Harvard- YenQing Library, so we invite everybody to go up and the join us and continue to talk. Thank you. Thank you very much.