

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS\*

Fölster, Max Jakob. Ph.D. Universität Hamburg, 2016.

*The Imperial Collection of the Former Han and the Origins of Philology in China: A Study of the Bielu, Qiliue and Hanshu Yiwenzhi.*

The imperial library of the Former Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–9 C.E.) is the first manuscript collection in Chinese history about which there is substantial information in form of a catalog. This is the *Yiwenzhi* chapter of the *Hanshu*, the dynastic history compiled by Ban Gu (32–92). As is well known, this chapter goes back to two earlier sources, the *Bielu* and the *Qiliue*, which originate from the collation project started in 26 B.C.E. under emperor Cheng (r. 33–7 B.C.E.). The importance of this grand project is generally accepted because it was not about making a mere inventory, but also encompassed producing editions of the different texts found in the imperial collection. In the beginning the project was headed by Liu Xiang (79–8 B.C.E.), who wrote editorial reports on each of the edited texts, all of these reports are believed to have been brought together in the *Bielu*. After Liu Xiang's death the work was continued by his son Liu Xin (ca. 50 B.C.E.–23 C.E.), who summarized the reports and created a classification scheme in the *Qiliue*, which Ban Gu indicates as his direct source. The *Bielu* and the *Qiliue*, however, are long lost and have only come down to us in fragments. This dissertation brings together all extant fragments as well as the *Yiwenzhi* in translation for the first time. Instead of attempting to reconstruct *Bielu* and *Qiliue* as such the fragments are put into relation with the *Yiwenzhi* using a system of cross-reference. In this way, multiple differing versions of fragments are retained, and it is shown that in many cases fragments cannot be unambiguously attributed to entries of the *Yiwenzhi*. This presentation of the sources situated in the appendix provides the basis for the dissertation's main body which consist of three parts.

The first part investigates in which relation the three sources stand to each other precisely. On the one hand, it can be shown that the *Bielu* only came into being after the *Qiliue*. On the other hand, it becomes clear that the marked changes found in the *Yiwenzhi*, which traditionally are attributed to Ban Gu, go back to Liu Xin. The latter had continued the collation project under the reign of Wang Mang (9–23 C.E.) and produced

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a revision of or sequel to the previously submitted *Qiliie*. Ban Gu deliberately does not mention this because he denies Wang Mang any legitimacy and makes him responsible for the fall of the Former Han dynasty.

The second part is devoted to the history of the Han dynasty's imperial collection. There are good reasons to assume that the assembling of the manuscripts forming the core of the collection only began under Emperor Wu (r. 141–87 B.C.E.) and not already at the beginning of Han dynasty as traditionally stated. Moreover, the sources suggest that there existed various collections at different places within the palace. The collation project led to the production of new manuscripts and thus created an entirely new collection, which is what we see in the *Yiwenzhi*. It is evident that administrative documents as well as judicial texts were not part of the collection, these were rather stored in special archives. Although the initial motivation behind the collation project remains unclear, it is obvious that Liu Xiang used his editorial reports, which were directly addressed to the emperor as a means to try exerting influence on the ruler and thus on court politics.

The third part analyses the philological methods developed by Liu Xiang to make editions of the texts found within the imperial collection. The innovative and systematic nature of these methods, which can be reconstructed through the editorial reports, is the reason why the collation project may be identified as the origin of philology in China. However, it is clear that Liu Xiang resorted to procedures in the production of documents and copying of texts that had been employed in the bureaucracy before. There is no doubt that Liu Xiang's editorial work had a significant impact on all received texts as we know them today. However, it is important to make further distinctions. In some cases these editions are compilations of texts by Liu Xiang himself; others are editions on the basis of a body of texts attributed to a certain author, which prior to the collation project must have circulated individually or in different sets; finally we have to assume that some texts existed in already stable editions, which probably did not need much editing.

Valmisa, Mercedes. Ph.D. Princeton University, 2017.  
*Changing Along with the World: Adaptive Agency in Early China*.  
Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI (Publication No. 10284327).

One of the major philosophical problems in Early China was the relationship between the person and the world, and in particular, how to act in relation to the world. This dissertation addresses the problem of agency in Early China, and pursues three main guiding questions: how to act efficaciously in different situations, how to cope with uncertainty and unpredictability in ordinary life, and how to achieve control and freedom.

I offer a critical and systematic analysis of an extraordinary model of successful action that I call “adaptive agency” or “adaptation” (yin 因). As opposed to other models of action attested in early texts, such as the prescriptive and the forceful, the adaptive agent necessitates great capacity of situational awareness, reflection, flexibility, and creativity in order to produce responses *ad hoc*: strategies of action designed for specific, non-permanent, and non-generalizable life problems. This model for choosing an action as an adjusted response to a specific situation guarantees the agent a higher success rate in his actions, let these be in political, military, professional, medical, religious, ethical or ordinary life contexts.

This dissertation is both born from a new methodological orientation and a contribution toward establishing it, by means of exemplifying how we can build meaningful critical theories in Early Chinese philosophy and intellectual history without using the obsolete hermeneutical categories of school of thought, book and author. I trace tensions and similarities in the Early Chinese approach to the problem of agency cross-textually, using a large range of textual materials and research methods. The philosophical proposal of adaptive agency is particularly suitable to this kind of methodological project, for it consistently appears across a wide variety of texts, authors, and intellectual orientations throughout the Early Chinese period, and therefore could not be studied by using the traditional hermeneutical categories.

Bertrand, Arnaud. Ph.D. Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (CRCAO), 2017. *First Steps to Office of the Western Han Commandery of Dunhuang (2nd—1st century BCE)*.

This dissertation centers on the history, archaeology and historical geography of Early China. It examines the steps of establishment of the imperial commanderies founded in the vicinity of the Western Han dynasty boundaries (206 B.C.E.–9 C.E.). At the turn of the second to first century B.C.E., the imperial strategic efforts to stabilize newly conquered territories passed through a complex system. Starting with the military occupation, it led to the migration of populations from the center of the empire. Focusing on Dunhuang (Gansu Province)—the westernmost commandery established within the Empire borders—we follow at regional scale those strategies of conquest and occupation. In addition to various fieldwork performed by the author, this research is based on a different approach of the Dynastic Histories, the use of archaeological data and the exploitation of untrodden epigraphic material. By using a new methodology, we have managed to individualize its development within a territory located at the crossroads of commercial and diplomatic highways with the Central-Asian kingdoms and cultures. As a

result of its cartography and chronology being brought up to date, we have obtained a complete revision of the first steps of organization of the main military and civilian centers of Dunhuang.

Ma, Tsang Wing. Ph.D. University of California, Santa Barbara. 2017. *Scribes in Early Imperial China*. Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI (Publication No. 10624392).

Scribes were the writing specialists of the ancient world. The study of scribes in ancient China appears to be less developed than those in other ancient civilizations due to the scarcity of the evidence. A group of highly educated intellectuals dominated the transmitted textual tradition in ancient China, and they portrayed scribes as corrupt officials manipulating the laws and documents to their own benefit. This situation has changed dramatically in recent years because of the modern excavation of administrative and legal texts from the workplaces and tombs of scribes in mainland China. These excavated texts allow for the recovery of the scribes' world, which was previously overshadowed by that of intellectuals.

This dissertation presents a social, institutional, and material history of scribes in early imperial China (221 B.C.E.–220 C.E.). By utilizing both the transmitted and excavated texts, the author argues against the stereotypical descriptions of scribes in current scholarship. Specifically, he examines how scribes evolved from a caste of hereditary specialists to a type of imperial officials during the political and social transitions from the Zhou to the Qin and Han periods; how scribes actually carried out the many administrative tasks under the unified empire and the problems and difficulties they encountered during their official service; and, finally, how the materiality of writing surfaces in early imperial China influenced the administrative work and qualifications of scribes.

Shi, Jie. Ph.D. University of Chicago, 2017. *The Mancheng Tombs: Shaping the Afterlife of the "Kingdom within Mountains" (Zhongshan 中山) in Western Han China (206 BCE–8 CE)*. Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI (Publication No. 10282832).

To extend the imperial authority to the newly conquered lands, early Western Han 漢 emperors in the second century B.C.E. dispatched their sons and brothers to reign over some remote kingdoms in the restive border regions, whose people lived in vivid memories of their pre-imperial pasts. While ancient historians only left succinct and fragmentary documents about these kingdoms, modern archaeologists have excavated dozens of royal tombs, which allow us to probe into religious, social, and political agendas of early imperial Chinese rulers.

This dissertation scrutinizes one king's complex identification with himself, his family, and his state in the formative period of the Chinese empire by analyzing his and his wife's tombs, dubbed Mancheng 滿城 Tombs 1 and 2, located in Hebei 河北 province in the northern border region of the Han Empire. Widely acknowledged as the richest, most significant, highest-ranking, and best-preserved royal tombs so far excavated in early imperial China, both tombs were found miraculously intact. More than ten thousand objects, many of which have been declared national treasures of China, were distributed on the floors in meaningful patterns across a cluster of interconnected, house-like burial chambers. These parallel tombs were occupied by King Liu Sheng 劉勝 (d. 113 B.C.E.) and Queen Dou Wan 竇綰 (d. ca. 109 B.C.E.), who re-established the originally non-Chinese "barbaric" state called Zhongshan (literally, "People within Mountains") in 154 B.C.E..

This dissertation argues that architectural plans, the patterns of furnishing, and the diversity of burial objects addressed the royal couple's three significant concerns during their lives: harmonizing the body with the soul, the husband with the wife, and the Chinese with the "barbaric." In doing so, this dissertation methodologically synthesizes interdisciplinary methodologies from art history, archaeology, and sinology by closely reading visual materials from the royal tombs in conjunction with textual sources about Zhongshan.

This dissertation consists of three main chapters. Chapter 1 examines the tombs' pattern of furnishing as the material embodiment of the traditional Chinese philosophy of harmonizing body and soul, which were housed respectively in the rear coffin and the front chamber. Chapter 2 studies the parallel relationship between the twin tombs as a visual commentary on the discourse of ideal husband and wife, who is mirroring and subject to the husband. The last Chapter 3 shows how non-Chinese elements were intertwined with Chinese elements in the tomb to represent the king's double identity both as the heir to the local "barbaric" cultural tradition and as a Chinese imperial representative.

This dissertation contributes to the field of Chinese art history and culture by providing the first comprehensive analysis of one of the most important archaeological discoveries of ancient China and by offering a theoretical and methodological reflection of what early Chinese tombs were and how to study them as a source for historical inquiries.

Foster, Christopher. Ph.D. Harvard University, 2017.  
*Study of the Cang Jie pian: Past and Present.*

Lost for nearly a millennium, recent manuscript discoveries are bringing back to light a foundational work of Han period "primary education 小學": the *Cang Jie pian* 蒼頡篇. This dissertation looks at the study of the

*Cang Jie pian* from two perspectives, that of the past and of the present. It begins with the latter, addressing fundamental methodological issues for modern scholarship on the *Cang Jie pian*. Chapter One and Chapter Two ask how, despite the fact that the *Cang Jie pian* failed to be transmitted to the present, we may still identify manuscript evidence with this title. Textual identity is conceived of as a (potentially shifting) pattern of constitutive characteristics, that then serve as criteria for affiliating new text to the *Cang Jie pian* title with varying degrees of confidence. Chapter One presents a textual history of the *Cang Jie pian* via received sources; Chapter Two lists all prospective *Cang Jie pian* manuscript pieces. Perhaps the most important *Cang Jie pian* manuscript however was not archaeologically excavated, but purchased for Peking University off the antiquities market. Chapter Three investigates the authenticity of this artifact, and concludes that it is indeed genuine, by identifying novel features first seen on the Peking University *Cang Jie pian* that have since been confirmed in archaeologically recovered data. The dissertation next turns to the role the *Cang Jie pian* played in the spread of literacy during the Western Han. The nature of the *Cang Jie pian* as a primer employed in scribal training is discussed in Chapter Four. A case study of the *Cang Jie pian* manuscript fragments at Yumen Huahai watchtower shows that even conscripted soldiers were copying this text in study. Yet a survey of the Peking University manuscript's vocabulary, in Chapter Five, reveals that the *Cang Jie pian* included sophisticated language that was not purely oriented toward government administration or military duty. Not only were scribes equipped with an erudite written vocabulary, but also through informal education networks like at Yumen Huahai, a broader range of Han society benefited from "trickle down" literacy.

Krijgsman, Rens. Ph.D. Oxford University, 2017.

*The Rise of a Manuscript Culture and the Textualization of Discourse in Early China.*

This thesis analyses a change in the ways people composed and engaged with texts during the Warring States (481–221 B.C.E.) period in Early China. It examines changes in the textual sphere as a result of an emergent manuscript culture, that is to say, the increased spread and reliance on manuscript texts for the communication of ideas. This shift moved away from the predominantly oral, commemorative, and ritual use of text in earlier periods, and provided key elements that would function in the text based discourse of the early empires. It influenced the way text across a variety of genres of writing was used and understood, structured and composed, and how it was collected and combined to form new arguments.

I focus on texts from the *Documents* 書, and *Odes* 詩 genres, in addition to philosophical texts dealing with the past, and collections of sayings and arguments dealing with questions from cosmological to ethical issues. These materials form the mainstay of Warring States intellectual discourse, and exemplify the following textual developments: 1) the rise of collecting materials into compilations; 2) the emergence of genre classification; 3) the development of new authorship functions, 3) an increase in textual structuring and the integration of lore about the past, 4) the development of commentarial traditions, 5) the emergence of an explicit, self-reflexive understanding of writing and transmission, 6) advances in material structuring of manuscript-texts that interrelate form and content.

The analysis is based primarily on excavated materials not edited during the early empires, and engages with comparative and interdisciplinary theory. It argues against models solely based on transmitted sources, which explained Warring States developments as a response to socio-political contexts. Instead, it posits developments in the textual culture itself as a necessary condition to explain the changes in intellectual discourse of the period.

Sanderovitch, Sharon. Ph.D. University of California, Berkeley, 2017.  
*Presence and Praise: Writing the Imperial Body in Han China.*

The ruler's body in early Chinese literature—whether silent and tranquil or bearing the scars of restless public toil; whether emanating light from the depths of the palatial chambers or displaying charisma while traversing the empire—has served as an idiom for the articulation of competing ideals of rulership, governance, and bureaucratization. This work takes the idiom of the ruler's body and the language of imperial representation as the primary object of scrutiny. It analyzes prevalent rhetorical and literary patterns in light of observations gained in the cross-cultural study of the royal body, metaphor in political discourse, and theories of representation. In particular, I am interested in the way top-down representation, of the ruler by his officials, was conceptualized and advocated in bodily terms, giving rise to some of the most common figures in early Chinese literature. This attention to the work of language in the political discourse of the early imperial period reveals some of the unique features of Chinese theories of monarchy, and brings to light paradigms that structure the literary representation of rulers and rulership across seemingly incompatible genres.

The main texts that drive the inquiry in the three core chapters date from two middle points in the long span of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.): the reign of Emperor Cheng 成帝 (r. 33–7 B.C.E.) in the late

Western Han, and the reign of Emperor Zhang 章帝 (r. 75–88) in the early Eastern Han. The first chapter takes Liu Xiang's 劉向 (79–8 B.C.E.) *Shui yuan* 說苑 as the gate to an ongoing intertextual discourse of rulership and bureaucratization, looking in particular at metaphors that take the ruler's body as the source domain. I show, in the second chapter, that some of the conceptual paradigms that structure such figurative constructions in the discourse of authority and delegation underlie literary strategies that support the goals of the ruler's encomiasts. At the center of analysis in this chapter is Cui Yin's 崔駰 (d. 92) "Four Panegyrics for the Imperial Tours" 四巡頌—a text that fell under the radar of most early-China scholars, East and West, due to a long interruption in its transmission. In the third chapter, focusing on the summaries and evaluations Ban Gu 班固 (32–92) had appended to the imperial chronicles of the *Hanshu* 漢書 (*History of the Han*), I argue that awareness to the poetics of praise is instrumental to the study of not only the rhetorical construction of the ruler's body but also the language of imperial historiography.

This work thus examines the relation between metaphor and politics, body and representation, and history and praise so as to highlight features of the early Chinese discourse of rulership that will have hermeneutical and analytical value for scholars of Chinese literature, political thought, and theories of monarchy across cultures.

Hu, Chuan-an. Ph.D. McGill University, 2017.

*Early Chinese Empires and the People without History: Resistance, Agency and Identity of Ancient Colonial Sichuan.*

Early Chinese Empires were colonial regimes. The major aim of my dissertation is to elaborate on previous interpretations of cultural change and to highlight the negotiation of identity between imperial and local agents in a colonial context. Colonial encounters not only have occurred in modern times, but also in early Imperial China. The state of Qin (778 BC–221 BC) conquered the entire land of Sichuan (316 BC). This region may well have been Qin's first colony before it finally unified China and created an empire (221 BC). Forceful military acquisitions of the land and the construction of a colonial landscape reshaped the indigenous cultures. The adoption of the metropolitan cultures (traditionally recognized as "sinicization") continued for more than five hundred years.

In the past, historians have tended to view cultural change under Qin and Han colonial rule as a normative process, by which the superior metropolitan cultures were passively accepted by the "naturally" inferior, local peoples of ancient Sichuan. However, the society of ancient colonial Sichuan was dynamic, composed of complex interactions among mobile individuals and groups. Local and metropolitan



identities emerged nearly simultaneously. Micro and macro identities developed in close relationship with each other and were mutually constitutive. The peoples in ancient Sichuan were not merely “sinicized,” but rather that they often played an active role in constructing their local cultural identities within greater imperial world.

Studies of ancient China often take cultural contact as monolithic and portray China as a state/empire with a monotonic voice. This dissertation seeks to deconstruct the Sino-centric identity through the investigation of the contact between China and her neighbor, ancient Sichuan. I see the cultural contacts as a set of diversified, uneven and heterogeneous interactions, rather than a one-way process. This dissertation deploys an interdisciplinary approach to address this question and to produce a critical synthesis based on the methods of history and archaeology; it analyzes textual sources in the form of standard histories, local histories and inscriptional evidence; and material cultures from burials and other sites. These approaches are well integrated with each other and will be used in both macro and micro contexts. Several expressions of identity are examined including local intellectual agency, ritual practice, and the compilation of local history.

Chao, Glenda E. Ph.D. Columbia University, 2017.

*Culture Change and Imperial Incorporation in Early China: An Archaeological Study of the Middle Han River Valley (ca. 8th century BCE–1st century CE).*

Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI (Publication No. 10637290).

This dissertation analyzes historical and archaeological evidence of culture change and the effects of state and imperial expansion on local communities to show that early Chinese cultural history is enriched when commoners are taken into account. I do this by focusing on heretofore unexamined evidence in the middle Han river valley of north-central Hubei province in early China during the 8th century B.C.E. to the 1st century C.E. I argue that this was a particularly important region because it was an important crossroads where multiple polities interacted in the period between the fall of the Western Zhou state and the rise of China’s first empires, the Qin and the Han.

Traditional historiography attributes culture change during this period and in this region to the imposition of a holistic set of customs by elites representing state or imperial power on newly conquered lands. The sources used and analyses employed are disproportionately derived from elite contexts. As a result, current historical narratives privilege elite views of culture and society. By contrast, my dissertation employs a methodology that utilizes newly excavated archaeological data to enrich extant narratives of the early cultural history of this region. I do this in

two ways. First, I interweave archaeological evidence of ordinary peoples' cultural practices into the dominant political and social histories of the era. Second, I focus on the middle Han river area as a geographical crossroads that was as culturally complex as frontier regions, a perspective rarely taken in traditional studies of early China.

Chapter 1 lays out the three-tiered theoretical and methodological framework of the dissertation. I first outline theories of culture change in ancient colonial encounters, derived from anthropological discourse, and that can be utilized to understand my novel data. I then describe how archaeologists utilize material evidence of past funerary rituals, which form the bulk of my data, to study culture change. Finally, I talk about the quantitative methods through which I render the archaeological data intelligible to interpretation.

In Chapter 2, I engage with the third and narrowest tier of my methodology by using assemblage theory as the basis for archaeological periodization of funerary ceramics at Bianying 卜營 cemetery. This method takes as its premise the idea that the appearance of new ceramic types and the disappearance of others, signify moments of change due either to incoming practices or internal development, when the social and cultural affiliations of the community of mourners came under question, thus, allowing for the assertion and negotiation of emergent cultural identities.

In Chapter 3, I use exploratory data analyses to identify meaningful patterns in the seven chronological periods identified in Chapter 2. In interpreting these patterns, I explain how, within the realm of funerary ritual, the introduction of new cultural practices into Xiangyang engendered the formation of hybrid culture at Bianying, and how the active agency of the local population was expressed through this process.

In Chapter 4, I employ these previous analyses in returning to the level of culture change in order to build a more robust model of cultural hybridity in early imperial China. To do this, I analyze the more rural and idiosyncratic cemetery of Wangpo 王坡, located four kilometers north of Bianying. I use the evidence of hybridized burial practices at Wangpo to show how my model destabilizes accepted analytical categories and, thereby, allows new narratives of early imperial history in China to emerge, narratives that bring the discipline into dialogue with the study of other regions of the ancient world.

In Chapter 5, I construct a new history of cultural formation in Xiangyang. I do this by interweaving the archaeological narrative outlined in chapters 2 through 4 with textual evidence drawn from bronze inscriptions, excavated texts, and transmitted historical records. I reconcile contradictions between the archaeological and textual records by tacking

back and forth between these two categories of source materials, treating both as different facets of the same story. In doing so, I present a holistic narrative of elite political designs on Xiangyang and its effects on locals, arguing that both groups mutually constructed one another in forming what we now know to be early imperial China. This work has important implications for further research by demonstrating the value of making more nuanced use of newly excavated material to reinvigorate the genre of regional history in China.

Berger, Elizabeth S. Ph.D. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2017.

*Bioarchaeology of Adaptation to Climate Change in Ancient Northwest China*. Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI (Publication No. 10268621).

The 4000 BP climate event was a time of dramatic change, including a cooling and drying climate and the emergence of pastoral practices and a distinct cultural identity across northern Eurasia. However, the link between the climatic changes and the cultural changes has not yet been thoroughly explored. This dissertation therefore assesses human biological measures such as frailty, physiological stress, and nutritional status to ask whether late Holocene climate change precipitated a crisis and collapse of subsistence practices, as has been claimed.

The dissertation employs the theoretical framework of the “adaptive cycle,” an understanding of complex systems that incorporates both change and continuity. The dissertation asks whether the Bronze Age transition, in which humans adapted to the arid climate of the second and first millennia B.C.E., constituted a “collapse” or “transformational adaptation,” in which the human-environment system changed categorically; or an “incremental adaptation,” in which defining system elements persisted with only peripheral changes. Skeletal samples from six populations (spanning 2600–221 B.C.E.) were examined for bioarchaeological markers of oral health, nonspecific infectious lesions, trauma, stature, and fertility. There was broad continuity and some improvement in population health measures in the Bronze Age study populations, with a decline in health in the Iron Age groups. Bronze Age subsistence systems therefore seem to have been resilient enough to adapt to the new climate, while the sociopolitical conditions of the Iron Age led to poorer health outcomes.

The Bronze Age transition has often been described in terms of “collapse,” and by critically engaging with this narrative, the current project demonstrates that the transition in fact entailed an incremental adaptation, rather than a collapse. These findings also point to how sociocultural factors can serve as a buffer against environmental stressors in some groups, while themselves serving as stressors in others.

Womack, Andrew. Ph.D. Yale University, 2017.

*Crafting Community: Exploring Identity and Interaction through Ceramics in Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age Northwestern China*. Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI (Publication No. 10783474).

This dissertation addresses questions related to craft production, social identity, and interaction through a multifaceted analysis of ceramic production and use during the Majiayao (3200–2000BC) and Qijia (2300–1500BC) periods in the Tao River Valley of northwestern China's Gansu Province. Situated between the Gobi Desert to the north and the foothills of the Tibetan Plateau to the south, for millennia this area acted as a key conduit for interaction between groups in central China and the Eurasian steppe. Majiayao and Qijia communities played a vital role in adopting, adapting, and retransmitting new domesticates, technologies, and ideas in both directions, helping shape the course of both Chinese and steppe civilization.

Despite these contributions to the development and spread of Chinese civilization, however, this region of northwest China is often pigeonholed into the trope of cultural devolution, with climatic shifts forcing a change from sophisticated Majiayao farmers to the small-scale, possibly pastoral societies of the Qijia. This conclusion is based almost entirely on shifts in pottery form and decoration, with the large, elaborately painted urns of the Majiayao period being replaced by the smaller, mostly undecorated pottery that defines the Qijia period. This dissertation challenges these conclusions by investigating the relationship between craft production, consumer and producer identity, and social interaction in order to provide a more nuanced understanding of the continuities and changes occurring between the two periods.

Taking a communities of practice based approach to ceramic production, this research focuses first on identifying potential groups of producers through assessment of paste recipes and forming techniques. In order to identify these groups, sherds from four Majiayao and Qijia habitation and mortuary contexts were sampled and analyzed using petrographic analysis. This technique provides information not only on the mineralogical makeup of a vessel, but also can provide insight into specific paste recipes and production techniques. This study revealed striking differences between vessels from mortuary and habitation contexts during the Majiayao period, pointing to the potential use of mortuary rituals for the negotiation and construction of relationships with other communities. It also demonstrated surprising continuity in production knowledge and techniques between the two periods, showing that changes in pottery form and decoration are not necessarily accurate reflections of underlying shifts in social identity.

In addition to petrographic analysis, whole vessels from mortuary contexts were also examined in order to assess how they were produced and used. Use-wear analysis was employed in order to understand the use histories of individual vessels, revealing that the majority of pots placed in graves during both periods were well used before interment. Standardization analysis was also carried out in order to explore potential production differences between various vessel types. It was demonstrated that while production does appear to vary between vessel types, there is impressive continuity in degree of vessel uniformity between the Majiayao and Qijia periods.

Combining the results of these three techniques, this research is able to address not only the communities of practice who were making these vessels, but also the potential roles they played in building and mediating relationships between groups. Specifically, for the northern Tao River Valley, it appears that despite significant shifts in pottery form, mortuary rituals, and the relationships that were mediated by these items and events, underlying communities of practice persisted over the course of more than 600 years.