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## ABSTRACTS

### PAIXUE Symposium

Classicising Learning, Performance, and Power  
*Eurasian Perspectives from Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*

School of History, Classics & Archaeology  
The University of Edinburgh  
12–14 December 2019

*Venue*  
Meadows Lecture Theatre  
William Robertson Wing/Doorway 4  
Old Medical School  
Teviot Place  
Edinburgh EH8 9AG



PAIXUE | ERC CoG 726371 | 2017–2022  
Classifying Learning in Medieval Imperial Systems:  
Cross-cultural Approaches to Byzantine *Paideia* and Tang/Song *Xue*

## THURSDAY 12 DECEMBER 2019

## Session 1

**Classicising learning  
and political thought**Chair [Curie Virág](#) (University of Edinburgh)[Christophe Erismann](#) (University of Vienna)**Educating students, burying  
Iconoclasm, and advising the prince:  
The classicising approach of Photius,  
Patriarch of Constantinople**

Coming soon

[Javier Cha](#) (Seoul National University)**Creativity in the service of the state:  
Autocracy without orthodoxy in the  
political philosophy of Sŏng Hyŏn**

Recent research in medieval Korean Confucian thought has opposed earlier approaches that relied on the teleology of modernisation theory and the colonialist notion of Korean ideological zealotry. A study published this year (J. Cha, *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 32.1, 2009, 35–80 with further references) has shown that Korea did not transition from medieval aristocracy where status was determined by birth to a rational bureaucratic stage based on merit. Rather, the volatile medieval Korean society that provided windows of opportunity to outsiders matured over time as to become a stable early modern oligarchy characterised by substratification. Similarly, the key-actors involved in this long-term social process were not necessarily staunch defenders of Confucian orthodoxy. Attracting the realm's most brilliant minds, academic institutions nationwide were transformed into hubs of intellectual innovation and encyclopaedic consumption of knowledge.

The alternative framing described above begs a new set of questions for the history of Korean Confucianism to be better understood. For instance, what was the relationship between such talented individuals and the state? Was there a conflict between creativity and authority? To shed light on these issues, this paper offers a new close reading of the works of Sŏng Hyŏn 成俔 (1439–1504), a fifteenth-century statesman and an admirer of the Chinese cultural icon Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101). Born to a family of

polymaths, Sŏng Hyŏn's wide range of scholarly interests resulted in the authorship and compilation of treatises, allegories, poetry, literary anthologies, and a definitive reference to court music. Among such works are a bundle of formative writings entitled 'Ten essays modelled after Dongpo' (*Ŭi Tongp'o'a simnon* 擬東坡十論). The 'Ten essays' present a unique opportunity to juxtapose the works of two scholars of similar persuasion, a Korean and a Chinese, who have written essays that share the same title. Despite his veneration of Su Shi, Sŏng Hyŏn did not identify with Su's faith in individualism and human talent, ontology of change, and occasionally subversive politics. Instead, Sŏng Hyŏn strongly believed in the king's moral transformative leadership, the efficacy of state-directed initiatives, and the order of ranks.

This paper places the autocratic tendencies presented by Sŏng Hyŏn in the wider context of his contemporary culture and explores the possibility whether they can be explained as a deviation from the norm, a result of long-term discursive formations, or a product of court politics. It also considers how and why throughout medieval and early modern Korea, the court's upper echelons enjoyed a great deal of intellectual freedom despite of public and superficial appeals to Confucian orthodoxy.

## Session 2

**Classicising learning and  
political systems**Chair [Gavin Kelly](#) (University of Edinburgh)[Elvira Wakelnig](#) (University of Vienna)**Ibn Bahriz's definitions and divisions**

The *Book of the Definitions of Logic* (Kitāb Ḥudud al-Mantiq) by the Nestorian (i.e., Church of the East) metropolitan of Mosul, Ibn Bahriz is one of the earliest philosophical texts extant in Arabic. Dedicated to the caliph al-Ma'mūn (r.813–833) it presents basic philosophical concepts which are taken from the late antique prolegomena preceding the commentaries on Porphyry's *Isagoge* and Aristotle's *Categories*. In its preface

Aristotelian logic is explained as being an indispensable tool that the just ruler must employ in order to judge his subjects. The aim of paper is to discuss how and why a Christian metropolitan wanted the Muslim caliph to know about this particular form of Ancient Greek learning.

[Florian Hartmann](#) (Aachen University)

**Classicising learning  
within the political system  
of the Italian communes  
(twelfth–thirteenth centuries)**

By the twelfth century, politicians in Italian city-communes not only imitated ancient Roman terminology but copied also the ideas and of the Roman republic. The paper argues that teachers in communal schools frequently quoted Roman ideology in their teaching manuals in order to supply future notaries with models for communal public documents which were designed to stabilise the political system of the city-communes.

### Session 3

**The politics of classicising learning**

Chair [Joachim Gentz](#) (University of Edinburgh)

[Elizabeth Tyler](#) (University of York)

**‘A Theban Song’:  
Fratricide, civil war  
and the politics of classicism  
in eleventh-century England**

Decades of vicious fraternal strife across the Anglo-Danish and Anglo-Saxon dynasties set the stage for the Norman Conquest (1066 CE), leaving the country always on the edge of civil war. This paper looks at the manuscript collection of Bishop Leofric of Exeter, the reception of *The Cambridge Songs* (a collection of poems from the German Imperial court) and the *Vita Edwardi Regis* (a life of Edward the Confessor) to open up how political chaos spurred the precocious reception and use of the Thebaid in eleventh-century England. It addresses larger questions, including the role of politics in the classicism of eleventh and twelfth

century poetry across England, France, Flanders and Germany.

[Michael Fuller](#) (University of California, Irvine)

**The Confucian canon and the  
construction of cultural identity  
in Song dynasty China**

The Song dynasty is best known for the rise of a meritocratic stratum of scholar-officials based on an examination system that tested exegetical mastery of the canonical Confucian corpus. Over the course of the 300-year dynasty, the modes of learning that canon and the nature of identities shaped through these modes of learning evolved significantly. The paper traces key features of this evolution.

[Luka Spoljarić](#) (University of Zagreb)

**Humanism and politics in  
Renaissance Dalmatia:  
Split, 1490s–1510s**

This paper discusses humanist literary production in Renaissance Dalmatia, presenting a case study of the city of Split, one of its main centres and intellectual entrepôts, in the period between the 1490s and the 1510s. Internally, this was a period of heightened social tensions between the city’s patricians and rich citizens, while externally the Republic of Venice, which ruled Split and the rest of Dalmatia, was under the growing pressure from the Hungarian kings and their Croatian viceroys, who sought to reclaim them. The paper takes a closer look at how humanist learning was used locally to advance various political agendas at play.

### Session 4

**Establishing political authority  
through classicising learning**

Chair [Patricia Ebrey](#) (University of Washington)

[Julian Yolles](#) (University of Southern Denmark)

**Performing learned Latin in the  
Levant (twelfth–thirteenth centuries)**

This paper examines the social performance of learned Latin culture in the Levant, with an emphasis on twelfth-century Antioch and Jerusalem, where Latin settlers used classicising

learning to compete against and differentiate themselves from other Levantine intellectual cultures. Antioch's history of contentious relations with Byzantines gave rise in the tenth- and eleventh centuries to a lively intellectual culture involving translation and religious polemic. This paper shows that this environment in turn stimulated twelfth-century Latins to engage in translation activities, to compose ostentatiously classicising histories, and to develop highly rhetorical polemical projects directed against Orthodox Christians. In the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, this Antiochene brand of learned Latinity found wider circulation in the work of William of Tyre, who innovated in presenting Christian Arabic works as authorities of learned culture. The paper concludes with a discussion of the continuities and discontinuities of learned Latinity in the thirteenth-century Levant, as these activities largely became the domain of mendicant scholars.

[Marina Loukaki](#) (The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)

**Politics and religion in Byzantium:  
Bishops and classicising learning in  
the provinces;  
Athens in the twelfth century**

A general education centred around the cultivation of *logos* (roughly what we would call today 'literature') and its ancient/classical forms in particular, remained current throughout the history of Byzantium. Following the late antique tradition, the Byzantine curriculum included the study of grammar, rhetoric and dialectics. But even the compulsory study of sciences (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music) was understood as an exercise leading to the study of philosophy. Imperial administration relied on officials trained in that curriculum. Church officials, organised according to the example of the imperial one, was seeking to also appoint administrators with a classicising education comparable to that of the imperial one. With an intertwined church and empire, education remained under the eye of the imperial authorities. And so, even if education in Byzantium included the study of a number of non-Christian texts, such references remained unproblematic

even for the strictest devotees. As the very form of the Greek language cultivated in this curriculum was a far cry from the spoken one, the carriers of that classicising learning, church or state administrators, formed a social elite clearly distinguishable from the general public.

The twelfth century in particular was an era of severe military conflicts and political upheavals in the Mediterranean. But in the Byzantine capital, Constantinople, the study of the classical *logoi*, and rhetoric in particular, was flourishing. In such a cultural and political climate, twelfth-century Byzantine emperors opted to appoint metropolitans (provincial bishops) at important sees with classicising learning and rhetorical training. A typical case in this respect is that of Athens, which suffered of the Norman invasions. This paper scrutinises the appointments of a brilliant jurist and the *maistor of the rhetors* (official court rhetor and professor of rhetoric) Nikolaos Hagiotheodorites as a metropolitan of Athens and that of his successor, the exceptional scholar Michael Choniates. It subsequently argues that the two appointments served specific political goals set by the Byzantine emperor.

[Ming-kin Chu](#) (University of Hong Kong)

**Performance of learning through  
imperial voice: Parallel proeses by  
Wang Zao and Sun Di in the  
northern–southern Song transition**

This paper discusses how scholar-officials in Song China performed 'classicising learning' through the medium of court documents written in the northern-southern Song transition. In early 1127, the Jurchen conquerors seized the Song capital of Kaifeng and captured two Song emperors, Huizong and Qinzong, together with nearly the entire Song imperial family. Zhao Gou, the ninth son of Emperor Huizong and the younger brother of Emperor Qinzong, managed to flee. With the assistance of some loyal Song subjects, he acceded to the throne and continued the Song reign in the south. Through a close examination of two genres of official documents written on behalf of the Song sovereign by two imperial drafters Wang Zao and Sun Di in the northern-southern Song transition, it shows how the two men demonstrated their literary skills in

composing parallel prose as well as their erudition in the Confucian canonical and Chinese historical traditions. It also discusses the extent to which such a performance of learning helped consolidate imperial power in the early Southern Song. It argues that the historical precedents and Confucian canons that Wang Zao

and Sun Di referred to in the official documents became important intellectual resources for Zhao Gou's image building and political propaganda, which helped legitimize the rule of and motivate extensive support for the Southern Song founder.

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## FRIDAY 13 DECEMBER 2019

### Session 5

#### Receiving and reconstructing the 'Classics'

Chair [Foteini Spingou](#) (University of Edinburgh)

[Christopher Nugent](#) (Williams College)

#### Thinking through categories:

##### The *Chuxue ji* and literary composition

While poetry may 'speak what is intently on the mind' (*shi yan zhi* 詩言志), the modes of expression through which the mind is given voice are constructed by the subject's understanding and internalization of the literary inheritance. The process of literary learning in the Tang period was not a straightforward path of memorising the classics and other earlier literary works. Instead, it often involved encountering these texts in excerpted and re-arranged form in a wide array of primers, *leishu* 類書, and other educational works. This paper looks specifically at the Tang *leishu* titled *Record of Early Learning* (*Chuxue ji* 初學記) to investigate how it excerpts and alters earlier texts and how learning through a work like this might influence poetic composition, including by such well-known writers as Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813–58).

[Jaako Hämeen-Anttila](#) (University of Edinburgh)

#### Regaining the Zoroastrian past: Muslim elites and Zoroastrian wisdom

The nascent Islamic Empire looked back to the Late Antique cultures as the origin of science and wisdom. While the Greek (and Graeco-Syriac) culture was by far the most important source of scientific and philosophical texts the Arabs

appropriated through translation, Pre-Islamic Iran was another major influence, not only on Muslim Iranians but the Arab-Islamic culture in general. The national history of Iran and the wisdom of both Zoroastrian *mobads* and Sasanian kings was transmitted to Muslims both through translators and oral informants. The wise *mobad* and the learned *dihqan* became standard figures in Arabic and Classical Persian literature. The present paper discusses the transmission and reception of Persian national history and middle Persian wisdom literature in first-millennium Islamic culture as a case of 'the legacy of a revered past'.

[Justin Stover](#) (University of Edinburgh)

#### The spring of Pergusa: Greek into Latin in the eleventh and twelfth centuries beyond the philosophical

The conventional history of translation from Greek into Latin in the Middle Ages is entirely concerned with technical texts: astronomical, medical, philosophical, logical, theological. The implicit argument of this history is that the extent of Latin appreciation for the Greek world was an interest in Greek knowledge. This paper gathers together a few gleanings from Ottonian Germany, early twelfth-century Paris, and mid-twelfth-century Sicily and Southern Italy to look at Latin translations of Greek poetic and literary texts, crowned by an analysis of the extraordinary manuscript of Theognis and Coluthus now in Paris (Bibliothèque nationale de France, manuscript supplément grec 388), but originally from Southern Italy, in which an interlinear Latin translation was copied in the twelfth century.

## Session 6

### Examinations of classicising learning

Chair [Stephen McDowall](#)  
(University of Edinburgh)

[Robert Ashmore](#) (University of California, Berkeley)

#### ***Dui yang* 對揚, or ‘responsive exalting’: Performative aspects of the early tang civil service examination**

The phrase *dui yang* 對揚 (roughly, ‘responsively exalt’) appears in dialogues between sage rulers and ministers of the Shang and Zhou in the classic *Book of Documents*, and is also a ubiquitous formula in Zhou bronze inscriptions. The phrase points to the action of a virtuous minister in responding to the sage ruler and thereby exalting that ruler’s prestige and efficacy. The medieval empires of the Northern and Southern Dynasties and Tang, a millennium and a half or so later, were naturally utterly different in nature, structure, and complexity from the old Bronze-age kingdoms recorded and mythologized in the classics—but they nonetheless operated under a sort of contractual obligation to represent their functioning as a continuation or restoration of those mythic sagely kingdoms. The early Tang inherited and consolidated a set of institutions and practices of rulership that strike us as heavily literary—official documents, especially imperial decrees and edicts and ministerial communiques with the throne, were cast in an elaborately allusive and antithetical style (sometimes referred to as ‘parallel prose’) whose weightiness and grandeur stood for medieval readers and listeners as a counterpart to the grandeur of the old ruler/minister dialogues of the *Book of Documents*. Primary sources relating to the early stages of the Tang civil service examinations and educational institutions remind us that even when the modes of assessment were purely written, the underlying rationale of these institutions was that of recapturing an ideal of ministerial *speech* in response to the sovereign. The supposed ‘literary’ focus of Tang civil service examinations has typically focused on the occasional inclusion of poetic genres such as *fu*

and *shi*, but in fact the far more central form—both in the examinations as well as in educational practice—was the *ce* 策, a form sometimes rendered as ‘policy question’, but which in fact is precisely a dramatized dialogue between the emperor (textually ‘ventriloquized’ by a court official drafting the question in the emperor’s voice) and the candidate, the latter in the role of fictive minister. This paper explored some of the primary sources relating to the early history of the Tang examinations, focusing in particular on some revealing cases of *failed* response, in relation to the medieval project of ‘translating’ Bronze-age traditions of ministerial speech into the realities of the medieval empire.

[Floris Bernard](#) (University of Ghent)

#### **Exploiting the talent for words: The sociological value of poetry and rhetoric in eleventh-century Byzantium**

The mid-eleventh century was a period in Byzantine history when an elite of ‘intellectuals’ was extremely successful in imposing its own ideals on the rest of society. Access to bureaucracy or to informal power networks at court was made dependent on excellence in education. In this meritocratic model, competition was seen as a necessary element. The rather decentralised system of schooling in Constantinople favored contests between both teachers and students with rivaling peers. The topics of these contests ranged from orthography to rhetoric. Even the display of learning, that is, science and theology, was often set in a competitive sphere. These contests were highly theatrical and ritualised, but too informally organised to call them ‘state examinations’. In any case, these contests provoked a considerable quantity of literature: texts (in verse or prose) which either professed alliance to one or another school or teacher, or attacked rival teachers or students. What was at stake, was (explicitly) the hierarchy in *paideia*, and hence, prominence in the elite of the capital.

## Session 7

### Classicising education

Chair [Anna Shields](#) (Princeton University)

[Pascale Hugon](#) (Austrian Academy of Sciences)

#### Tibetan Buddhist scholars and the Indian heritage

At the beginning of the era known as the ‘Later Diffusion of the Doctrine’ (starting from the middle of the tenth century CE), Tibetans turned to India, Kashmir and Nepal to obtain teachings and texts, in order to revive the spread of Buddhism after the chaotic period that followed the collapse of the Tibetan Empire (c.650–850), marking the end of the ‘Earlier Diffusion’. It is India also which figures as preeminent point of reference in the scholarly program set forth a few centuries into the Later Diffusion period by the polymath Kunga Gyétsen (1182–1251), also known as Sakya Pandita, i.e., ‘the pandit of Sakya’. This program, commonly dealt with by Western scholars under the labels of ‘indianising’ or ‘indologising’ of Tibetan scholarship, is discussed in this paper from the perspective of classicising learning —with the term ‘classicising’ to take here the sense of the reliance on, and conformity with, the tools and models of the Indian tradition. The paper situates Sakya Pandita’s program in the perspective of his own training and of the broader context of the ‘Later Diffusion’, in particular in relation to the movement that has been termed ‘neoconservatism’ or ‘neoconservative orthodoxy’ (R. Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance*, New York 2005). Representatives of this trend held India (Indian texts and Indian teachers) to be the sole authentic source and reference point for the ‘true doctrine’. Their prioritisation of India and praise of the Indian heritage was associated with the rejection of ideas and practices without an attested Indian source, which are derogatorily termed ‘inventions’. The paper highlights specific elements of Sakya Pandita’s classicising program (meant to cover the scholarly activities of composition, exposition and debate), discuss its feasibility and legacy, and point to some

precedents in recently discovered material from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries.

[Alberto Rigolio](#) (Durham University)

#### Education and *paideia* in early Syriac

The transformation of Syriac from a dialect of Aramaic used within the kingdom of Edessa to the language of one of the most prestigious literatures of Late Antiquity was an extraordinary historical development. From its earliest stages, however, Syriac language and literature developed against the backdrop of a lively educational system in the Syriac language, which, unfortunately, can be reconstructed only indirectly. The present paper collects the evidence and traces the role that classicising learning played in the development of Syriac literature and culture.

[James Hankins](#) (Harvard University)

#### Philosophy, the liberal arts, and the humanities in Renaissance Italy

The paper argues that one of the distinctive marks of the *studia humanitatis* as a program of study in the Renaissance was that it brought together the ancient Socratic tradition of philosophy as a way of life with the Isocratean and Ciceronian tradition of *philanthropia/humanitas* acquired through the study of literature (including history) and oratory. These traditions had existed in rivalry with each other in antiquity but were combined in the *studia humanitatis* of the Renaissance. The combination led to a devaluation of natural philosophy and logic as part of philosophy’s program of moral self-cultivation, but gave new moral purpose and philosophical weight to literary studies. The cultural-ethical ideal of humane learning of the Renaissance aimed to produce a kind of person who, in the end, resembled more the Confucian ideal of the gentlemen (*junzi* 君子) than it did either the ancient ideals of the philosopher-sage or the orator, the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*.

## Session 8

### Competing with the Classics

Chair [Divna Manolova](#) (University of York)

[Asuka Sango](#) (Carleton University)

#### **The acts and texts of commentary: Debate (*rongi*) as a means of classicising learning in medieval Japanese Buddhism**

In medieval Japan, scholar monks regularly performed a public debate (*rongi* 論議) or an oral discussion of Buddhist doctrinal issues. For scholar monks, it was both an important opportunity for gaining a promotion within the ecclesiastic hierarchy and a major mode of doctrinal learning. This paper analyses various texts that scholar monks read, wrote, and memorised in preparing for debates. It argues that these debates aimed to instil intellectual habits of ‘classicising’ through which to interpret these texts both orally and in writing. Debate as a commentarial exercise focused on quotations from Buddhist canonical texts, and its ultimate goal was reconciling an apparent, internal contradiction (*etsū* 会通) while quotationally representing a coherent tradition of Buddhist learning.

[Michael Hope](#) (Yonsei University)

#### **The wisdom of royal glory: The oral transmission of knowledge at Mongol Quriltai ceremonies**

The often ferocious competition for power and the raw martial ability that was required to lead on the steppes of Inner Asia has often obscured the emphasis given to the ‘royal wisdom’ of many Mongolian rulers. The Great Khan Möngke (r.1251–1259) was rumoured to have solved mathematical problems that had plagued even Euclid, whilst the Ilkhan Ghazan (r.1295–1304) was credited with inventing a number of astronomical devices to observe and measure the passage and distance of stars and planets. The cultivation of learning and wisdom was considered an essential criterion for successful leadership and Mongolian rulers worked hard to display this quality by gathering elders, wise-men, spiritual leaders, and scholars to their court.

There is still a great deal that we do not know about the court ceremonial of the early Mongol Empire (1206–1260), yet the accounts of bureaucrats and secretaries serving in the Mongol empire, along with travelogues written by visitors from abroad, testify to the *quriltai*, a seasonal gathering of notables from across the Mongol Empire, serving as a stage for the khan to publicly display his generosity, power, and also his support for learning, especially through debates and the recitation of wise sayings (*biligs*). The present paper analyses how these public displays of learning helped to reinforce the power of the khan, whilst also easing the integration of new knowledge from the conquered territories.

[Bram Fauconnier](#) (University of Ghent)

#### **The artists around Dionysos: Performing Greek culture in the Roman empire**

*Agones*, the great competitive festivals of the Greek world, were prime venues for the public performance of classical Greek culture. They were serious business: they were not considered as entertainment, but as competitions for honour in the presence of the gods. In the Roman imperial period, the history of *agones* reached its apex, as hundreds of prestigious festivals were organised across the Mediterranean world. Successful competitors travelled from *agon* to *agon*, from province to province, and were the superstars of the Graeco-Roman world. In the musico-dramatic *agones*, the so-called Dionysiac artists brought age-old tragedies and comedies as well as musical pieces, thus keeping the classical traditions alive and passing them on to future generations. These men had their own professional association, the powerful thymelic synod, which all over the empire contributed to the organisation of *agones* and represented the interests of its members. This paper discusses the social, political and cultural impact of musico-dramatic contests by asking the following questions: first, what kind of classicising learning was performed in the *agones*? Second, how did the Dionysiac artists relate to the orators of the second sophistic, those other exponents of classical Greek culture? Third, how did the traditional *agones* relate to



‘un-classicising’ performances? Fourth, how did the ecumenical artists’ association transform the cultural capital of its members into social and political influence? To sum up, this paper

expounds how the musico-dramatic agones and the Dionysiac artists contributed to the canonisation of the classical past of Greece – a canonisation that has left its traces up to this day.

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## SATURDAY 14 DECEMBER 2019

### Session 9

#### **The social dynamics of classicising learning**

Chair [Michael Höckelmann](#)  
(University of Erlangen-Nürnberg)

[Lieve van Hoof](#) (University of Ghent)

#### **Libanius’ letters: Culture as an instrument for political power**

Almost from the very time when they were written, Libanius’ letters have been acknowledged as important epistolographic models, and thus as highly successful cultural performances. The goal of many of his letters, however, was not merely to display culture, as to influence other people and their decisions. To that aim, Libanius made ingenious use of his large social network. This paper examines how Libanius uses the cultural form of letter-writing to mobilise his network and wield political power.

[Ashton Lazarus](#) (Kyushu University)

#### **Scholars and performers in Heian Japan: Addressing commoners in Fujiwara no Akihira’s writings**

In Heian-period Japan (794–1185 CE), classicising learning was synonymous with Sinitic learning. A not insignificant number of court scholars spent their careers studying classical Chinese texts, composing prose and poetry in literary Sinitic (*kanbun* 漢文), and using their knowledge of the canon to advise court nobles and members of the royal family on social and political issues. The scholar Fujiwara no

Akihira 藤原明衡 (d.1066) is especially known for his work compiling *Honchō monzui* 本朝文粹, a voluminous text modelled on Xiao Tong’s 蕭統 *Wen xuan* 文選, but he also produced a number of ‘minor’ works on a range of topics. Intriguingly, some of these contain detailed representations of the various non-elites who lived in the capital, a striking phenomenon at odds with the obsessively upper-class focus of most contemporary texts written in Japanese, such as *The Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari* 源氏物語), *The Pillow Book* (*Makura no Sōshi* 枕草子), etc.

This paper explores Akihira’s discourse on non-elites and reconsider the social significance of kanbun writing during this time period. I examine two texts in particular: *An Account of the New Monkey Music* (*Shin sarugaku ki* 新猿樂記) and *Letters from Unshū* (*Unshū shōsoku* 雲州消息).

[Milan Vukašinović](#) (ANAMED, Koç University)

#### **Style, identity or legal argument? Classicising learning in the writings of Epirote bishops (thirteenth century)**

Numerous direct or indirect references to classical authors are identified in rich and diverse writings of three Epirote bishops from the thirteenth century, Demetrios Chomatenos, Ioannes Apokaukos and Georgios Bardanes. Examining their narrative and rhetorical functions inside these composite collections or individual texts, the paper tries to interpret the societal role and importance of this type of classicising learning. It also tackles the problem of a possible polysemy of a specific social practice.

**Session 10**  
**Classicising learning  
 and elite formation**

Chair [Eduardo Manzano Moreno](#)  
 (St Andrews/CSIC Madrid)

[Griet Vankeerberghen](#) (McGill University)

**The Ban family of western and  
 eastern Han and the performance  
 of classicising learning**

The paper focuses on the famous Ban family of Western and Eastern Han. It explores how members of the Ban family used classical learning to raise and maintain their family's status in constantly shifting political environments. The Ban family rose to prominence during the reign of Emperor Cheng in the late first century BCE, and was able to maintain a high profile until 130 CE. Whereas it is well-known that both male and female members of the Ban family were deeply engaged with classical learning, little effort has been made to tie their success as a family to their efforts to engage with the classical past, through the production of learned texts, staged performances, and genealogical activities. The paper argues that theirs was a deliberate strategy in which, at least initially, the goal was less classical learning itself than upward mobility. Thus they, like other less-well documented families around them, were able to take advantage of and contribute to a politico-social climate in which classicising learning was increasingly validated, and was gradually becoming coterminous with elite standing. Classicising learning, it is further argued, also gave the Ban family a pass to keep investing in other specialised skills – e.g., military skills and the ability to negotiate with non-Han peoples – that it might have taunted less, but that were just as intrinsic to their identity as a family. There was, in Western and Eastern Han, a voluntarist aspect to classicising learning, in the sense that it remained the domain of strategic choices that were made with the long-term interests of the family foremost in mind.

[Takeshi Inomata](#) (University of Arizona)

**Elite performance and power  
 in Classic Maya society**

In Classic Maya society, many of the inscriptions, elaborate ceramics and carved ornaments were made by artists and scribes who belonged to the royal or noble classes. These individuals learned hieroglyphic writing, calendrical systems, mathematics, mythology and dynastic histories, probably through many years of training. They served as keepers of valued knowledge in their communities, who spread some aspects of their learning through the production of carved monuments, paintings and other objects, as well as through ritual performances in public and courtly settings. At the same time, they were holders of esoteric knowledge, which distinguished the elite from the rest of society and contributed to the power and prestige of these individuals in courtly politics. This process depended not only on the quality of their artistic products but also on the recognition of their performances, which needed to be witnessed by various audiences. These elite artists and scribes were also court officials of high ranks, who helped the rulers in polity administration, diplomacy and ritual. The diversity in their roles indicates that art, ritual and politics were intertwined in Classic Maya society.

**Session 11**

**Enacting classicising learning**

Chair [Lucy Grig](#) (University of Edinburgh)

[Elena Gittleman](#) (Bryn Mawr College)

**Holy actors: Christian learning and  
 the ancient theatre in the *Menologion*  
 of Basil II**

Drawing from contemporary theories of performativity, this paper examines the convergence of Ancient theatre, Christian devotion, and imperial piety in the eleventh-century *Menologion* of Emperor Basil II (r.976–1025), manuscript graecus 1613 of the Vatican Library. Each of the 430 pages of the illuminated Church calendar is headed by a title; a short vita and depiction of the saint share the rest of each page. The spatial equivalence of text and image is unusual, giving prominence to the illuminations, and inviting careful looking and contemplation in a private devotional context. Given the

conventionality of the texts and the prominence of the images, the paper argues that the illuminations were the active creators of meaning in the manuscript. The images inflect the holy figures with allusions to classical theatre and rhetoric, which in turn shape the Emperor's performance of faith.

The miniatures can be separated into two main categories: narrative martyrdom scenes and iconic depictions of saints. The manuscript is best-known for its 247 graphic martyrdom scenes. The paper explores these violent images in terms of their affective performance of Christian piety and it closely considers the 128 iconic images of saints standing in front of distinct architectonic structures, which, it is contended, were meant to evoke *scaenae frons*—the elaborately decorated, permanent backdrops of Greco-Roman theatres. As such, the images also employ a mode of performance, which aligns them with the martyrdom scenes in ways that have not previously been explored: in different ways, both the martyrdom and iconic scenes are played out on a 'stage'.

Early Church Fathers, such as Lactantius (c.250–c.325 CE), Augustine (354–430 CE), and John Chrysostom (c.349–407 CE), recognised the theatre's role in spreading classical learning and literature, and often warned against the didactic power of the theatres as a corrupting force. The paper argues that the narrative martyrdom scenes and the iconic saints demonstrate an adaptation of the theatre as a didactic space, ultimately articulating the authority of the saints through the classicising image of actors or rhetoricians on a stage. The *Menologion* of Basil II elevates the saints into holy performers; Christian saints and martyrs become the new actors, the new rhetoricians, the new teachers to the Emperor.

[Stephen West](#) (Arizona State University)

#### **Classicisation and humour:**

#### **Upending classicism in quotidian texts in the Song**

The ability to quote and use the classics in humorous or sarcastic ways is a common feature in Chinese performance literature from the late tenth Century on. One finds in early court

performer skits in the Northern Song and Jin, several episodes in which passages from the classics or classical literature are applied in sarcastic ways to humiliate court bureaucrats and high ministers in front of the emperor. In dramatic literature, exemplified by Hong niang's use of classical quotations in *The Story of the Western Wing* (*Xixiangji* 西廂記) to irk student Zhang or make fun of him and his lover, Yingying, classical citations or citations from the canonical texts of the tradition of writers are often used sarcastically to comment on characters' behaviour or to clinch a joke. Students in drama were often identified as *suān* 酸, 'sour', both for their pedantry and their penury, since they were fed from vats of pickled vegetables at the Academies. In other quotidian texts, such as the daily encyclopaedia, the *Expanded Record of the Forest of Affairs* (*Shilin Guangji* 事林廣記), the path to classical learning is cheapened by being treated as a simple act of memorisation and mechanical production, stripped of its basis in ethics. This underside of the tradition, hidden in second-order texts seldom treated by historians, we find classics, classical learning, and their function in an ethical meritocracy degraded by the power of money and by the stage, where the role-types of performance that functioned much like the role types of Roman theatre, were able to slip in and out of characterizations of officials and classical scholars, parodying the bases of the Chinese social and ethical hierarchies. This opens a social reality hidden by an emphasis on philosophical texts.

[Ariel Stilerman](#) (Stanford University)

#### **Classical poetry across the spatial and social expansion of court culture in**

#### **Early Medieval Japan**

In premodern Japan 'classicising learning' referred chiefly to the study of Chinese texts. Against this background, a new form of 'classicising learning' emerged, rooted in the domestic court, at the beginning of the medieval period. This paper looks at the transformation of Japanese court poetry (*waka* 和歌) from a social performance into the core of a comprehensive process of cultural transmission. Throughout the classical period (794–1185), court poetry was an

indispensable part of private and public social interactions among aristocrats. Poems were recited at imperial enthronements and religious rituals, and exchanged privately as part of polite homosocial and heterosocial communication, a custom documented in works of both historical and fictional narrative. During the medieval period (1185–1600) new trends emerged that would eventually replace this rarefied use of poetry in the everyday lives of aristocratic elites, first by the protracted study of poetry under professional instructors, and later by stand-alone texts combining classical court poetry with the newly-risen interests and aspirations of warriors and merchant townfolk.

The displacement of actual performance by extended systematic training had remarkable consequences beyond poetic practice. It enabled a process of cultural transmission that served as a model for other areas of activity, with effects discernible even in contemporary Japan. In the modern day, the so-called ‘traditional’ disciplines (such as the tea ceremony, haiku 俳句 poetry, noh 能, theatre) engage in an analogous form of ‘classicising learning.’ They offer an experience mediated centrally by lineage-based institutions, explicit and remunerated learning relationships, and pedagogic artifacts such as primers and treatises. More-over, their standardised curricula are designed to last a lifetime, justified by the claim that one is learning much more than just an artistic discipline.

## Session 12

### Classicising learning in law and diplomacy

Chair [Niels Gaul](#) (University of Edinburgh)

[Jonathan Skaff](#) (Shippensburg University)

#### Sui-Tang Diplomatic Protocol as Eurasian Ritual Performance

Studies of imperial Chinese diplomacy conventionally assume that Confucian rites had indigenous origins isolated from Eurasian practices, and that a major purpose of ritual was to distinguish Chinese from foreigners. This paper seeks to question these assumptions in regard to Sui-Tang diplomatic ceremonies by comparing Sui Dynasty (581–618) and Tang

Dynasty (618–907) diplomatic protocols with those of contemporary Turko-Mongol nomads and other Eurasian peoples.

Despite the Confucians’ perception that their ritual tradition extended unbroken back to antiquity, foreign envoys visiting the Sui and Tang courts would not have found the ceremonies to be entirely alien. Patrimonial pageantry, status ranking, displays of obeisance, gift exchanges and feasting were idioms of diplomatic intercourse familiar to ambassadors from Byzantium to Japan. The patrimonial aspects formed a foundational semiotic code for diplomatic ceremonies while particular choices in decorations, music or symbols distinguished polities from each other, creating symbolic political boundaries. The perception of Chinese exceptionalism in foreign relations is partly due to the existence of an extensive textual record. Compared to neighbouring medieval Inner Asia where praxis in interstate relations was mainly customary, Chinese dynasties were unusual in possessing institutionalised and codified procedures that were based upon earlier precedents.

External influences on Sui-Tang China conventionally are explained as a legacy of Xianbei rule during the Northern Dynasties. This paper argues that we also need to consider the ongoing legitimization requirements of expansive empires, like the Sui and Tang. Rulers who had a deep reservoir of symbols at their disposal were more likely to impress a wide variety of visitors from inside and outside of their realms. Patrimonial aspects of diplomatic ceremonies waxed with the expansion of the Sui and Tang into Inner Asia, but waned as the empire contracted after the An Lushan rebellion of 755–763.

[Daphne Penna](#) (University of Groningen)

#### Classical literature

#### in Byzantine legal sources

Did the emperor, the law professor and the judge in Byzantium use the Classics and if so, how and why? This paper focuses on testimonies of ‘classicising learning’ and references to Classical literature in Byzantine legislation and jurisprudence, as well as in Byzantine legal sources reflecting classroom teaching.

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