



Call for Applications

The Chinese Legal Tradition: From Late Empire to the Current Day

Workshop

Frankfurt am Main, June 12 – 16, 2023

The Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory invites applications to the first conference of a new working group dedicated to exploring the history of a distinctly Chinese legal tradition linking the imperial past to the legal regimes of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Assertions about the distinct qualities of Chinese law can be found in all manner of claims: both those supporting China's legal tradition as distinct from Western legal regimes (and therefore immune from certain forms of critique) and those denying or critiquing the legitimacy of law in China. This is as true for the global reception of Chinese law in the late imperial period as it is for scholars and observers of the PRC's administration of justice in the current day.

But in spite of the ever-present nature of the claim that the Chinese legal tradition is essentially distinct from those of Europe and the US, assertions about the exact content of the Chinese legal tradition and the precise institutions that define its evolution vary wildly from characterization to characterization (when they are specified at all). This conference and the working group that emerge from it will serve as a platform for scholars of Chinese law in different eras to propose and evaluate which institutions, features, trajectories of development, patterns, and themes might fruitfully describe a Chinese legal tradition and its evolution.

Applicants are invited to propose papers on themes that offer a comparative framework for evaluating and describing the evolution of law in China.

Themes might include but are not limited to:

- The role of bureaucratic institutions in determining the operation of justice
- The handling and evaluation of evidence or truth claims
- The role of information, fact, and text in the administration of justice
- The nature, origin, or operation of legal rationales
- The relationship between central authorities and local authorities
- The audience and subject of justice
- The aims of the law
- Concepts and forms of power integral to justice
- The forms and evolution of legal events and procedures and their inputs
- The relationship between political organization and legal administration
- Factors that shape the development of the law and its administration



The workshop

This initial meeting will be a week-long workshop in Frankfurt am Main (or area) from **Monday, June 12 to Friday, June 16, 2023**. Participants will present and evaluate proposals on potential frameworks for the articulation and study of a Chinese legal tradition, and will discuss shared readings and scholarly work related to the proposed themes to evaluate the feasibility of each proposal in determining an agenda for the next several years. At the end of the workshop, organizers will then select a portion of those themes to organize future sessions and reading group activities between sessions.

Application process

Scholars interested in contributing to the first round of this workshop are invited to submit 1) a paper abstract (anywhere between 250 and 1,000 words) describing the theme that they would like to propose to the group; 2) an annotated bibliography listing a sample of five to ten articles or monographs that might be read by the group for discussion; and 3) a CV.

Please send applications to sekduve@lht.mpg.de by **February 15, 2023**.

Organizers

The workshop is organized by Maura Dykstra (Caltech) and Thomas Duve (mpilht).