

Fenye is an astral-terrestrial correspondence system that associates constellations (heaven) with regions (earth) based on the ancient Chinese cosmology of inseparable heaven, earth, and the human world. It first emerged during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (from the eighth to the third century BCE) for political prognostication, then continued to develop throughout the long course from Han (202 BCE–220 CE) to Song (960–1279). Scholars believe that fenye gradually lost its political prognostication function after the Song dynasty.

However, in the genre of local gazetteers that documented local information and emerged after the Song dynasty and flourished in the late imperial period, *fenye* somehow obtained a crucial status: not only do 80% have a dedicated section on fenye, but almost all of them start the gazetteer by identifying the region in the vast empire through its associated lodge. We question why fenye, which started as a divination system, became such an essential part of local gazetteers.

After the seventeenth century, as western astronomy became popular in China, fenye was heavily criticized by literati for its imprecise and illogical correspondence. The 1781 public criticism from the Qianlong emperor is considered by scholars a major sign of the decline of fenye. However, with quantitative analysis, we found many gazetteers still kept fenye afterwards. In this workshop, we bring together historians from different domains and time periods to examine how fenye became a popular chapter in Chinese local gazetteers, how gazetteer compilers resisted removing fenye, and what eventually replaced fenye at the time of crisis—when Chinese knowledge systems were eventually torn down and replaced by western epistemologies in the transition from imperial to republican China.

FORMAT

The aim of this workshop is to discuss 12 pre-circulated papers by the “Fenye in Local Gazetteers” working group to help the authors polish their pieces for publication. We have invited external commentators to give comments on their designated papers. In the meantime, we expect the participants and audience to read the papers beforehand to foster fruitful discussion.

The two-day workshop is divided into 6 sessions. Each session occupies 80 minutes and consists of two papers that are related in content. Each session will start with comments given by pre-designated commentators, which will be followed by joint Q&A. All papers have two commentators, each will spend up to 10 minutes to highlight the major contributions of the paper and make suggestions about arguments, structure, weakness, and possible improvement. After all the designated comments (roughly 40 mins), the rest of the session will be dedicated to joint Q&A. There will be NO PRESENTATIONS given by the authors at the workshop.

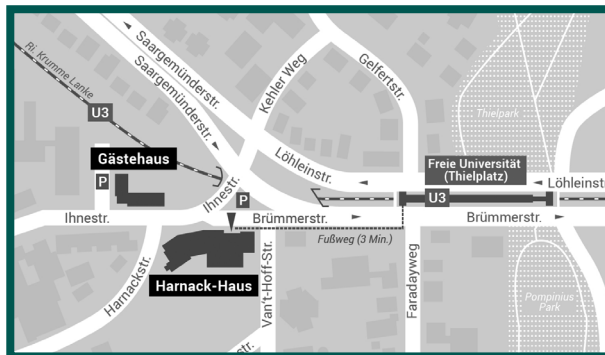
Useful links:

[Workshop website](#); [Local Gazetteers working group](#)

REGISTRATION

Registration is required for participation, in person or online. If you would like to attend the workshop, please send an email to event_dept3@mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de with the subject line “[Registration] Role of fenye workshop,” and specify your name, position, and current affiliation, ideally by May 22, 2023.

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WORKSHOP

Empire under the Night Sky

The Role of Fenye (Astrological Contents) in Late Imperial China

MAY 25–26, 2023

HARNACK HOUSE (BERLIN) AND ONLINE

ORGANIZER: SHIH-PEI CHEN



“Illustration of the (Dragon’s) Horn and Neck Lodges, *Fenye* of Zheng / Jiao kang zheng fen zhi tu,” Henan General (Provincial) Gazetteer, 1660 (Source: Harvard Yenching Library).

PROGRAM

THURSDAY, 25 MAY

- 09:15–09:30** Welcome
Shih-Pei Chen
- 09:30–10:50** **PANEL 1**
Chair: Shih-Pei Chen
- Yang Qiao** Astronomy as a Science of the Archive in Imperial China (221 BCE–1911 CE)
Commentators: Catherine Jami, David Pankenier
- Zhu Haohao & Zhou Qi** The “Intermediary Status” of Fenye in Local Gazetteer: Study on Mei Wendings Ningguo fuzhi xingye in Early Qing China
Commentators: Christopher Cullen, Ping-Ying Chang
- 10:50–11:20** COFFEE BREAK
- 11:20–12:40** **PANEL 2**
Chair: Mario Cams
- Tan Dan** Uneven Transformation of the Fenye Section of Local Gazetteers in the Qing Dynasty
Commentators: Zhang Jiajing, Daniel Morgan
- Shih-Pei Chen** Fenye by the Numbers: A Quantitative Analysis of Astrological Contents in Chinese Local Gazetteers
Commentators: Daniel Morgan, Catherine Jami
- 12:40–13:40** LUNCH BREAK

- 13:40–15:00** **PANEL 3**
Chair: Mario Cams

- Wu Huiyi** Tracing Western Learning in the Fenye Chapters of Qing Dynasty Local Gazetteers (1660–1820)
Commentators: David Pankenier, Christopher Cullen
- Tristan Brown** The Long Arm of the Calendar: Western Learning’s Impact on Astrology and Fengshui in Qing China
Commentators: Christopher Cullen, Catherine Jami

- 15:00–16:00** **DISCUSSION**
Chair: Shih-Pei Chen

FRIDAY, 26 MAY

- 09:30–10:50** **PANEL 1**
Chair: Shih-pei Chen
- Lyu Chuanyi** From Outline to Discipline: The Transmutation and Construction of Fenye Models in the Process of Great Unification
Commentators: David Pankenier, Shi Yunli
- Daniel Patrick-Morgan** Popular Science: Astronomical Data in Chinese Local Gazetteers Using LoGaRT
Commentators: Shi Yunli, Catherine Jami
- 10:50–11:20** COFFEE BREAK

- 11:20–12:40** **PANEL 2**
Chair: Qiao Yang
- Qiu Jingjia** From the Astrological Mysteries to the General Knowledge of Geography: The Transmission of the “Field Allocation” Astrology in the Perspective of Intellectual History
Commentators: Ping-ying Chang, Shi Yunli
- Zhang Jiajing** From Astrological Correlation to the Coordinate System: The Transformation of Fenye Knowledge in Chinese Local Gazetteers after the Introduction of Western Sciences
Commentators: Shi Yunli, Mario Cams
- 12:40–13:40** LUNCH BREAK
- 13:40–15:00** **PANEL 3**
Chair: Qiao Yang
- Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann** Spatial Framework Underlying the Fenye Maps in the Household Encyclopedia
Commentators: Mario Cams, David Pankenier
- Sun Mengmeng** Heaven, Earth, and Hou at Places: A Study on the “Fenye-Qihou” Sections in Local Gazetteers of the Ming and Qing Dynasty
Commentators: Christopher Cullen, Tristan Brown
- 15:00–16:00** **DISCUSSION**
Chair: Dagmar Schäfer, Shih-Pei Chen
General Comments from Sarah Schneewind