

SINO1003 Greater China:
A Multi-disciplinary Introduction

Open Lecture

Why the Past Still Matters in China:

Cultural Authority and the Politics of History



Guest Speaker
Prof. Yujie ZHU

Moderator
Prof. Ji LI

Date: March 31, 2026 (Tue)

Time: 11:00 am - 12:50 pm

Venue: CPD 3.28 HKU

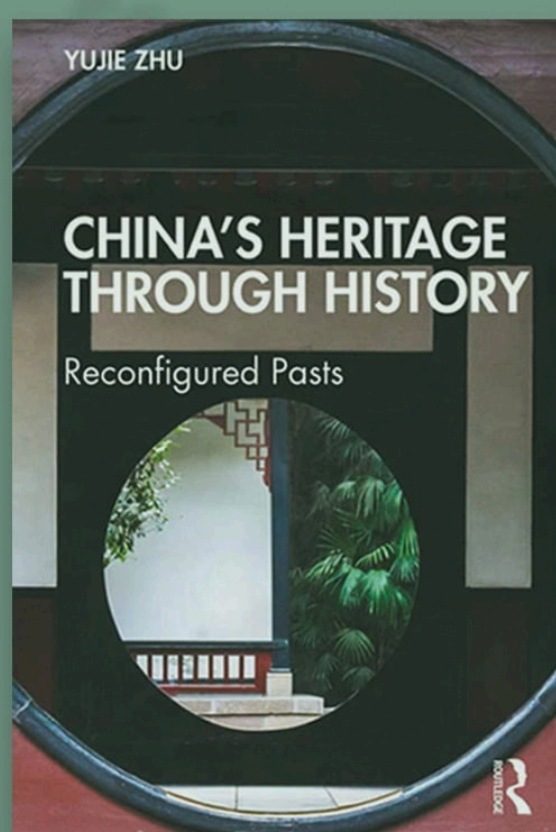
All are welcome.
[Register here:](#)



Why does the past continue to matter so powerfully in China today? This lecture examines how history operates in China not simply as memory or tradition, but as a form of cultural authority that shapes identity, legitimacy, and public life across time. Focusing on the Orchid Pavilion gathering and its calligraphic legacy, it traces how a fourth-century cultural event has been repeatedly reproduced and reinterpreted from

imperial Republican periods to socialist and contemporary China. Through practices ranging from calligraphy and site reconstruction to museums, heritage tourism, and digital circulation, the talk shows how historical continuity is produced through transformation, and how elite cultural forms are reworked for broader public participation. The lecture offers a long-term perspective on history, power, and cultural governance in China.

About the Speaker



Yujie Zhu is Associate Professor at the Centre for Heritage and Museum Studies at the Australian National University. He is currently a visiting fellow of the Contemporary China Studies Programme at HKU. Trained as an anthropologist at Heidelberg University, his research examines how history, culture, and power are negotiated through heritage and public culture in China and East Asia. He is the author and editor of multiple books, including the recent monograph *China's Heritage through History* (2024), and has published widely on heritage politics and memory in China. His work combines historical and ethnographic research to analyse how the past is reproduced and transformed across different political eras and media.

