



**Towards  
'National  
Rejuvenation':  
Sun Yat-sen's  
Vision for China  
Revisited**

**PROGRAMME**

孫文 公為天下

**CONFERENCE**

**7<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

11:30 am – 6:00 pm

**Location:** TU Berlin (HBS 005)  
Hardenbergstraße 16-18, 10623 Berlin

**Language:** English

# IMPRINT

## Center for Cultural Studies on Science and Technology in China

Kaiserin-Augusta-Allee 104-106  
10553 Berlin

Sekr. KAI 1-4  
Raum KAI 1.107-1.114

**Tel.:** +49-(0)30-314-24211  
[www.tu.berlin/china](http://www.tu.berlin/china)

### Layout:

Meike Buntен  
Wilmerdorfer Straße 122-123  
10627 Berlin  
[www.okkool.de](http://www.okkool.de)



**7<sup>th</sup> March**

**START:** 11:30 am

**END:** 6:00 pm

**CONFERENCE**

**Location:**  
TU Berlin  
Hardenbergstraße 16-18  
10623 Berlin (HBS 005)

**Language:** English

**REGISTRATION**

**We look forward to  
your participation**

Attendance is free of charge.

**Please register**  
with Mr. Andreas Pfeiffer at  
[a.pfeiffer@tu-berlin.de](mailto:a.pfeiffer@tu-berlin.de).



---

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Conference Schedule.....4**

**Abstracts and Bios .....6**

1. Johannes K uchler ..... 6

2. SHI Ming ..... 6

3. Marta Ferdebar ..... 7

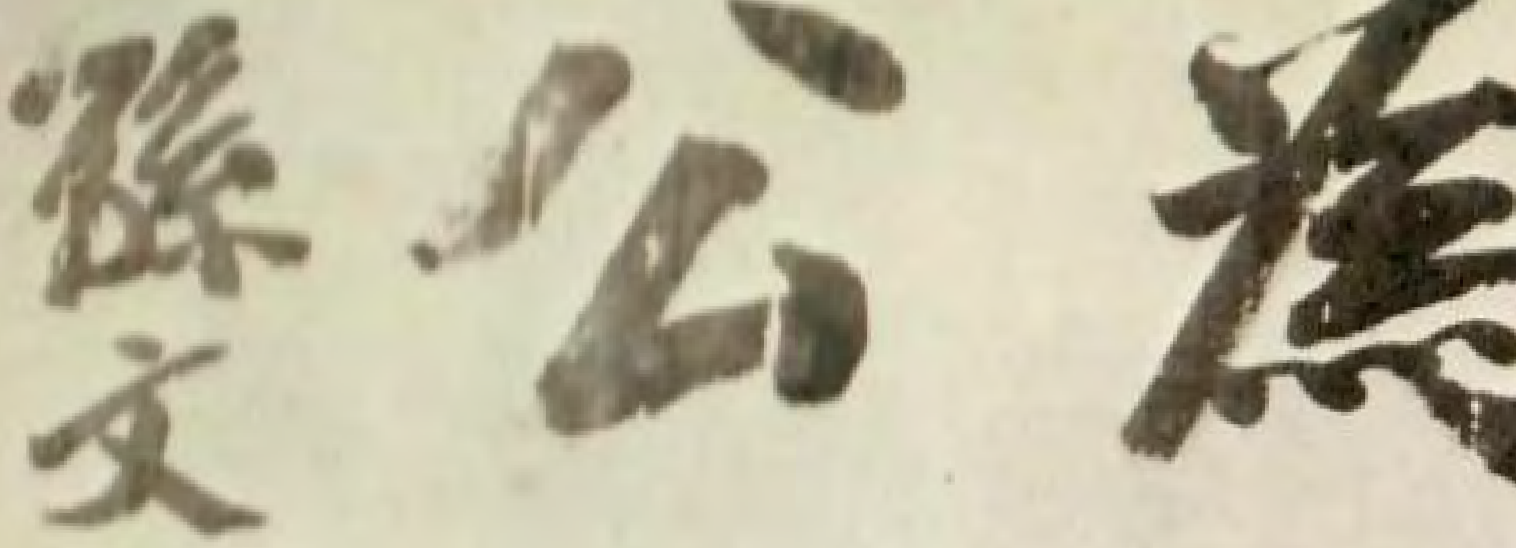
4. Adam Cathcart und Susanne Stein ..... 8

5. Christine Moll-Murata ..... 9

6. YANG Xinying ..... 10

7. Jonas Schmid ..... 11





# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

11:30–12:30 PM

## Arrival and Light Lunch

Participants arrive, register, and enjoy a light soup before the conference begins.

12:30–1:00 PM

## Opening and Welcome Remarks

- **Sigrun Abels**,  
*Head of the China Center at TU Berlin*
- **Johannes Küchler** and **Susanne Stein**,  
*Conference Initiators*
- **Tania Becker** and **Andreas Pfeiffer**,  
*Project CKN Germany*

1:00–1:30 PM

## Introductory Lecture

**Küchler, Johannes**

Some Remarks on the biography of Sun Yatsen, “the evolving representative of an evolving revolution in an evolving country”(K.A. Wittfogel)

**Presentation:** 1:00–1:20 PM

**Discussion:** 1:20–1:30 PM

1:30–2:00 PM

## Keynote

**SHI Ming**

Sun Yatsen: One century of dealing with his multi-level, highly debated and unavoidable heritage

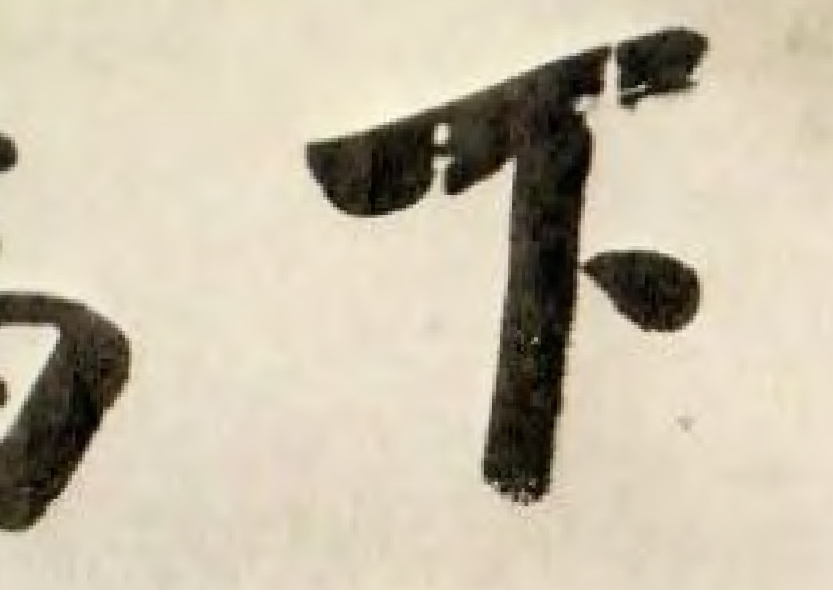
**Presentation:** 1:30–1:50 PM

**Discussion:** 1:50–2:00 PM

2:00–3:30 PM

## Session 1: Sun Yat-sen’s Visions on China’s Development

1. **Marta Ferdebar**  
Nation-Building Across Eras: Sun Yat-sen’s Reconstruction Plan as the Foundation of Xi’s Chinese Dream  
**Presentation:** 2:00–2:20 PM  
**Discussion:** 2:20–2:30 PM
2. **Cathcart, Adam & Stein, Susanne**  
Settler Colonialism on China’s North-western Frontiers: Sun Yat-sen’s Development Programme for Mongolia and Xinjiang (1919)  
**Presentation:** 2:30–2:50 PM  
**Discussion:** 2:50–3:00 PM
3. **Moll-Murata, Christine**  
Sun Yat-sen on Electricity, Natural Resources, and Public Utilities  
**Presentation:** 3:00–3:20 PM  
**Discussion:** 3:20–3:30 PM



**7<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

11:30 am – 6:00 pm

**Location:** TU Berlin (HBS 005)  
Hardenbergstraße 16-18, 10623 Berlin

**Language:** English

3:30-4:00 PM

**Coffee Break**

4:00-5:00 PM

**Session 2: International Perspectives and Education**

1. **YANG Xinying**

The Role of Sun Yat-sen in the Sino-French Institute: International Higher Education Cooperation in the 1920s and Its Far-reaching Legacy in Literature and Politics

**Presentation:** 4:00-4:20 PM

**Discussion:** 4:20-4:30 PM

2. **Schmid, Jonas**

The Many Faces and Names of Sun: (Not) Depicting Sun Yat-sen in Sinophone and German History Textbooks since 2013

**Presentation:** 4:30-4:50 PM

**Discussion:** 4:50-5:00 PM

5:00-5:30 PM

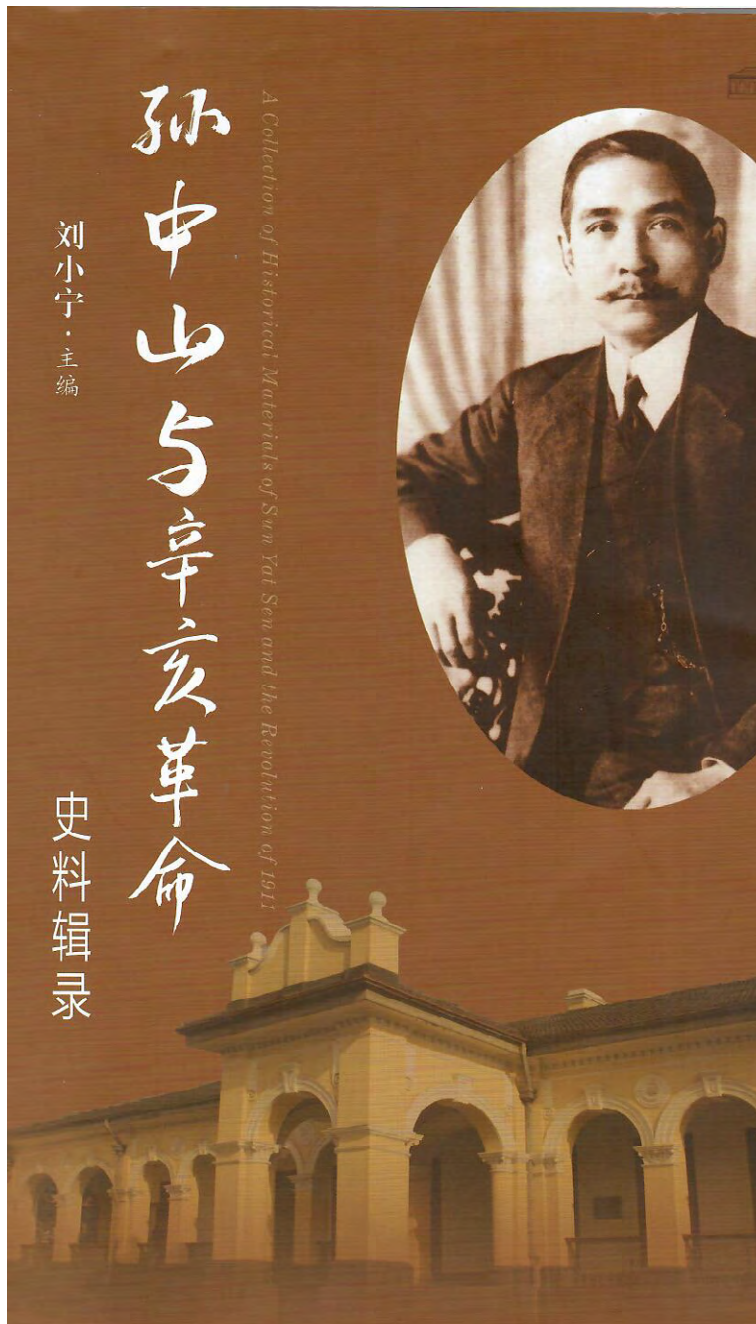
**Closing Remarks, Final Reflection**

All speakers on stage. Closing remarks delivered by Johannes Küchler and Susanne Stein to officially conclude the conference.

**Photo Session**

6:30 PM

**Dinner at Chen's Wok**



---

# ABSTRACTS AND BIOS

## **Johannes Küchler**

**Some Remarks on the biography of Sun Yatsen, „the evolving representative of an evolving revolution in an evolving country“ (K.A. Wittfogel)**

### **ABSTRACT:**

Sun Yatsen's political philosophy, evolving over some 40 years of political activism, can be read as a continuous exchange between the rapidly changing Chinese society and global development. Guangdong was the door opener linking China to the outside world. And Sun Yatsen was a revolutionary from this province. His life span reaches from the impacts of the Taiping Revolution to the initial phase of the Soviet Party State. Japan – North America – Europe and Southeast Asia: Having lived abroad for more than two decades, the political biography of Sun is marked by his constant reconsideration of western political theory and practice in its relevance for China's revolution.

### **SHORT BIO:**

Johannes Küchler is a retired professor, chair: History and Theory of Landscape Development, faculty Planning, Construction and Environment, Berlin University of Technology. He is now affiliated with the China Center of TU Berlin. From the late 1960s onwards he worked on projects related to urban development and resource protection in Southeast and East Asia.

## **SHI Ming**

**Sun Yatsen: One century of dealing with his multi-level, highly debated and unavoidable heritage**

### **ABSTRACT:**

When Sun Yatsen coined the Republic of China, both terms were multifaceted, even ambiguous: What is China? What means „Republic“? The question behind both terms asks for the meaning of „nation“ / nation-state and for the procedural aspects how to unfold an economically feasible and socially acceptable path for future development. The answers changed during his life-time. In addition, throughout the 100 years after Sun's death these unavoidable questions received controversial interpretations in Taiwan and on the continent, remaining thorny issues for the ongoing political debate.

### **SHORT BIO:**

Shi Ming worked as Speaker, Translator and Journalist for Radio Beijing. Following the blood bath of June 4th 1989, he moved to Germany. Since then he works as a free lance journalist for a broad range of German language media. Together with Daniel Leese he published: Leese, Daniel / Shi, Ming (2023) Chinesisches Denken der Gegenwart Schlüsseltexte zu Politik und Gesellschaft, München: C.H. Beck.

---

## Marta Ferdebar

### Nation-Building Across Eras: Sun Yat-sen's Reconstruction Plan as the Foundation of Xi's Chinese Dream

#### ABSTRACT:

This paper explores how Sun Yat-sen's Plan for National Reconstruction, first outlined in the early 20th century, remains a foundational influence on Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation. Sun Yat-sen's vision, centered on modernisation, economic self-sufficiency, and strong civic institutions, aimed at transforming China into a resilient and unified nation. His Plan for National Reconstruction proposed initiatives in infrastructure, education, and economic development, laying a blueprint for a strengthened national identity and comprehensive modernisation. Under Xi Jinping's leadership, Sun's concept of national rejuvenation has been adapted to meet 21st-century goals. The Chinese Dream, introduced as a guiding philosophy for contemporary China, emphasises economic prosperity, political stability, and cultural pride, drawing on Sun Yat-sen's ideals of a unified, prosperous state. Xi's vision reflects Sun's ideas, especially in the emphasis on infrastructure projects, technological advancement, and fostering a shared national identity. While the social and political landscapes differ significantly between Sun's time and today, the principles behind both leaders' visions reveal a continuity in China's long-term developmental goals. This study assesses how Sun Yat-sen's ideas are preserved and reinterpreted within modern Chinese policies and the Chinese Dream. The methods of this study include a comparative analysis of Sun Yat-sen's foundational ideas as outlined in his *Plan for Na-*

*tional Reconstruction* alongside Xi Jinping's speeches and writings, particularly in *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, which provides an extensive view of his strategic vision for national rejuvenation. By examining Sun's legacy through the lens of Xi's political strategies, it provides insight into the enduring relevance of early 20th-century Chinese nationalism in shaping China's path toward national rejuvenation, asserting that Xi's Chinese Dream is as much a continuation as it is a modernisation of Sun Yat-sen's foundational ideals.

**Keywords:** *National Rejuvenation, Chinese Dream, Nation-Building, Sun Yat-sen, Xi Jinping*

#### SHORT BIO:

Marta Ferdebar is an Administrative Assistant in the Conference Unit of the Robert Schuman Centre of Advanced Studies, a part of the European University Institute. She holds an MA in International Relations and Diplomacy from Libertas International University in Croatia and specialises in EU-China relations. During her studies, Marta has served as a trainee at several political institutions, including the European Commission and European Parliament. She has experience in political communication and event coordination, having worked as a Junior Associate at the APROPOS Group as well as with various communication agencies and NGOs across the EU. Additionally, Marta has presented at several international conferences on topics including EU-China relations, China-Western Balkans dynamics, and EU migration policy. Her main research interests include the EU's foreign and security policy towards East and Southeast Asia, as well as comparative political theory.



---

## Adam Cathcart & Susanne Stein

### Settler colonialism on China's north-western frontiers: Sun Yat-sen's development programme for Mongolia and Xinjiang (1919)

#### ABSTRACT:

From the early twentieth century onwards, an ever-larger number of Chinese intellectuals and state actors turned their gaze (as well as their enthusiasms) on Republican China's north(west)ern frontier areas. When confronted with ongoing territorial encroachment by European powers and Japan along the eastern seaboard and with a devastating sequence of military campaigns, natural hazards, and food crises in China Proper, the "colonisation" of these lands seemed to promise an all-in-one solution to the country's most pressing domestic and international problems (*neiyou waihuan* 内忧外患).

One of the early proponents of Han Chinese colonisation of China's continental borderlands was the Republic's "founding father" (*guofu* 国父) Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925). Our paper analyses Sun's railway and colonisation scheme for Mongolia and Xinjiang, first published in 1919, as the starting point for an "integrated economic development of a unified China" (Kirby) and considers its significance as a point of reference for Chinese frontier reclamation strategies from the mid-1920s down to the present. The paper situates Sun's ideas within a larger array of writings from the era about the ecological limitations of such settlement, amid a rising global discourse on resource scarcity and population growth.

Sun Yat-sen sketched the north-west as a huge reservoir of mineral resources and sparsely settled, rhetorically feminized "virgin land" (*chunütu* 处女土) that can be rightfully reclaimed and developed for the economic benefit and rejuvenation of China as a whole. Sun's visions would ultimately prefigure the Republic of China's ambitious plans "to open up and develop the north-west" (*kaifa Xibei* 开发西北) during the 1930s, the appropriation of its natural resources under Communist rule during the latter half of the twentieth

century as well as the more recent policies of "Great Western development" (*Xibu da kaifa* 西部大开发) and the Belt and Road Initiative (*Yi dai yi lu* 一带一路) of our own era.

#### SHORT BIOS:

**Adam Cathcart** is associate professor of East Asian history at the University of Leeds, UK, and an editor of *Decoding the Sino-North Korean Borderlands* (Amsterdam University Press, 2021). At Leeds, he teaches modules on the history of the People's Republic of China, the international history of the Korean War, and Sino-Japanese conflict. His dissertation analysed interactions between the U.S. occupation of Japan and China in the period from 1945-1952. He won China Quarterly's Gordon White Prize in 2010 for his article "To Serve Revenge for the Dead: CCP Reflections of the War of Resistance in the PRC Foreign Ministry Archive, 1949-1956," and won the R. Serge Denisoff Award in 2018 for the best article (co-authored with Pekka Korhonen) in the journal *Popular Music and Society*. His recent articles have appeared in *Journal of Historical Geography* and *Chinese Historical Review*.

Adam Cathcart, University of Leeds (A.Cathcart@leeds.ac.uk)

**Susanne Stein** is the coordinator of the China Competence Network Ruhr Niederrhein (C NET RNR), a project funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). She has held postdoctoral research positions at the universities of Frankfurt and Tübingen, focusing on the ecological degradation and rehabilitation of China's north-western dryland systems, with support from the BMBF and the German Science Foundation (DFG), and served as a research fellow at Ruhr University Bochum from 2019-2020. She has won awards from the Gerda Henkel Stiftung for a research project on the reclamation and transformation of China's Inner Asian Drylands from the 1950s to the present.

Susanne Stein, Alliance for Research on East Asia (AREA) Ruhr (susanne.stein@area-ruhr.de)



---

## Christine Moll-Murata

### Sun Yat-sen on Electricity, Natural Resources, and Public Utilities

#### ABSTRACT:

Since the late nineteenth century, electricity as a new form of energy became available first in Shanghai and then gradually in other industrialized centers in China. The enormous rise in productive efficiency it offered was seen as indispensable to the construction of any modern state, as expressed in Lenin's famous dictum of 1920, "Communism is equal to Soviet power plus the electrification of the entire country". Sun Yat-sen mentioned electricity in his 1893 letter to the powerful governor-general of Zhili Province, Li Hongzhang, in which he sought to recommend himself and his ideas for saving the country. Later important texts that mention electricity are his *Memoirs of a Chinese Revolutionary* (1918), *International Development of China* (1919) and his *Lectures on the Three Principles of the People* (1924).

This paper presents Sun's main ideas and places them in the broader context of the intellectual trends of his times. These ideas reached from a basic explanation of the relationship of magnetism and electricity (1918) to its manifold uses. He promoted the potential of using electricity to replace human labour in order to create a future situation in which humans would work exclusively with their minds, in other words, when no more physical labour, but exclusively material resources were to be applied (1893). In the "Lecture on Food" section of the "Doctrine of Livelihood" (1924), Sun formulated more concrete plans for developing hydro-power stations on the great rivers of China. This, he claimed, could light up entire cities. What seemed utopian at the time was later often cited as the "Father of the Nation's" vision when the Three Gorges water reservoir was actually built. The paper also discusses the relative importance that Sun attached to electricity, the exploitation of natural resources, and public utilities, for state-building in the early twentieth century.

#### SHORT BIO:

Christine Moll-Murata works at the Ruhr University Bochum. She is Chair Professor for History of China, Director of the Taiwan Research Unit and the Speaker of the DFG Research Training Group „East Asian Futures: Visions and Realizations on National, Transregional and Global Scales“ based at the Ruhr-University Bochum and the University of Duisburg-Essen. She specializes in socio-economic history from the Song through the Republic of China. Her writings include *State and Crafts in the Qing Dynasty* (Amsterdam 2018), and „The Translation of Western Books on Natural Science and Technology in China and Japan: Early Conceptions of Electricity“, in Erich Pauer / Regine Mathias (eds), *Assessing Technical Education in Modern Japan* (Folkstone 2022), and is the editor of *Northeast Asia in Focus: Life, Work and Industry between the Steppe and the Metropolises, 1900-2020* (Duisburg 2022).

Christine Moll-Murata, Ruhr-Universität Bochum  
(Christine.Moll-Murata@rub.de)

---

## YANG Xinying

### The Role of Sun Yat-sen in the Sino-French Institute: International Higher Education Cooperation in the 1920s and Its Far-reaching Legacy in Literature and Politics

#### ABSTRACT:

Emerging from the Boxer Indemnity and the trend of labor-study programs in France, the Sino-French Institute (Institut Franco-Chinois, 1920-1951) documented the efforts of China's leading universities to promote international higher education cooperation, alongside the pursuits of Chinese students engaged in national reforms during the first half of the 20th century. While Cai Yuanpei of Peking University and the intellectuals of the World Society played pivotal roles in the establishment of the Sino-French Institute, Sun Yat-sen and Zeng Zhongming in Guangdong made significant contributions to its long-term operation as well. In the later years of his life, Sun Yat-sen issued directives on behalf of the Guangdong government, agreeing to designate the Sino-French Institute in Lyon as the overseas division of National Guangdong University (now Sun Yat-sen University), and the Guangdong government began to fund numerous local students to study at the Sino-French Institute in Lyon since year 1921. Among its most valuable legacies are perhaps the literary figures and politicians closely associated with the institution, who profoundly inspired by French thought in various ways, including Dai Wangshu, Su Xuelin, Luo Dagang in modern Chinese literary history, and Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yi in Chinese communist party history. In 1925, to commemorate Sun Yat-sen's passing, Chen Yi, then a student at the School of Literature of the Sino-French Institute in Beijing, wrote "Burial at Xishan" (西山埋葬) to express his mourning. A century later, reviewing the history and influence of the Sino-French Institute provides us with a special perspective to memorialize Sun Yat-sen's international vision and his educational ideals,

while also reveals the longitudinal continuity and horizontal cosmopolitanism evident in China's modern and contemporary history, which remains a topic worthy of ongoing reflection even nowadays.

#### SHORT BIOS:

YANG Xinying, PhD student at the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (INALCO) and at the French Research Institute on East Asia (IFRAE / UMR 8043) ; master's degree in China studies (literature & culture) at Yenching Academy of Peking University (2022-2024) ; exchange student in modern literature at ENS de Lyon (2023-2024) ; bachelor's degree in French and English language & literature at Sun Yat-sen University (2018-2022). Her research focuses on modern Chinese literature and comparative literature, with a particular interest in Sino-French literary relations from the late Qing dynasty to the Republican period. Her current project examines Chinese literati staying in France during the 1920s and 1930s, including their translation, reception, and creative activities, as well as their interactions with the spheres of modern Chinese literature through various forms of literary spaces (journals, societies, institutions, etc.). Email: xinying.yang@inalco.fr

---

## Jonas Schmid

### **The Many Faces and Names of Sun: (Not) Depicting Sun Yatsen in Sinophone and German History Textbooks since 2013**

#### ABSTRACT:

History textbooks are manifestations of government-sanctioned narratives about the past as well as historical narratives in society at large. How events and people are depicted in textbooks thus offers insights into which historical actors are viewed as still holding significance for today. This paper thus analyses how Sun Yat-sen is depicted in recent history textbooks from Germany, the Peoples Republic of China and the Republic of China (Taiwan) and how these depictions have changed in the last decade.

In the state-controlled history textbooks of the PRC Sun is given a prominent place as a “revolutionary pioneer” -- a stark contrast to the majority of (state-approved) history textbooks from Germany and the ROC in which he is not mentioned. When mentioned, in all three cases, textbooks focus on his role in the 1911 revolution and his “Three Principles of the People” that are often quoted in the textbooks. However, different depictions and names of Sun abound in the textbooks: In German textbooks he is at times called a revolutionary and at times a reformer putting his nationalist ideas center; in Taiwanese textbooks his cooperation with the Soviet Union is given a more prominent role. The PRC textbooks, in contrast, focus on his actions before the revolution 1911.

In all three cases the depiction of Sun has undergone changes in the last ten years: In Germany, Sun is presented more often in history textbooks due to the rise of content related to Chinese history (and non-European history in general) in German history classes. In Taiwan, however, Sun appears less in recent textbooks, no longer being called the “father of the nation” with most textbooks focusing more on broader topics such as changes in society than single historical actors.

Interestingly, in PRC history textbooks for senior high school students a similar development has taken place. These examples show that Sun’s historical legacy in history teaching (and society at large) is very much contested -- not only due to political factors, but even more due to approaches in historical research that focus less on single historical actors.

#### SHORT BIO:

Jonas Schmid (M.A.) is a PhD student at the Institute of Sinology, Center for Asian and Transcultural Studies at the University of Heidelberg. In his PhD project he analyses the depiction of Chinese history in German high school history textbooks comparing it with Sinophone history textbooks.



