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English Review of Dissertation

My dissertation topic is *The Study of Dress Uniforms and the Significance of the Guan Ceremony in the Pre-Qin Dynasty*. It explores the significance of the Guan Ceremony, including the process of zhudai 著代, the public name (zi) 取字, the three Guan 三加, and the meeting with the national leader 見君.

1. Research Motivation

I became interested in traditional Chinese culture ten years ago and was keen on Chinese traditional dress and poems. So it is my honour to come to the Academy of Sinology in the University of Wales Trinity Saint David to learn Confucianism study. I still remember the first time when I learned the Guan Ceremony, the Marriage Ceremony, and the Archery Ceremony in course of *the Records of Ritual* (Liji 禮記) in 2020, I was so exciting that I cannot express my feelings. Thus, I had the general idea for my dissertation topic to research on *the Records of Ritual* since my undergraduate studies, although I did not have specific idea at that time.

I also read some articles on Chinese aesthetics, and I find it very interesting. For instance, Li Zehou explores the Classical Chinese aesthetics based on the rite and music tradition of traditional China.¹ Zhang Jiwen compares the differences between Chinese and Western Costumes, which I also find intriguing.² The dress uniform and dress culture between the East and the West differ due to their distinct histories, cultures, and lifestyles. Although currently I do not have enough ability to research the comparative study of both, I believe they are worthy subjects for exploration in the future.

The Chinese traditional dress has a long history, dating back to the pre-Qin Dynasty of Xia (c. 2070–c. 1600 BCE), Shang (c. 1600–c. 1045 BCE) and Zhou Dynasties (c. 1046–256

¹ Li, Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, 1st edn (United States: University of Hawaii Press, 2009).

² Zhang, Jiwen, 'An Exploration of the Differences between Chinese and Western Costumes in the Archaeological Archaeology of Clothing Culture in Different Periods of Agriculture,' *Journal of Environmental and Public Health*, 2022 (2022), 1–12.

BCE).³ It has formed a complete system of dressing culture and rite and music culture. The Han people 漢族 have been the main population in China for thousands years , residing primarily in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River, such as Henan Province 河南. However, for historical reasons, the Manchus 滿族 assumed supreme rule during Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). Many Han people were required to wear Manchu clothing and shave their heads. Thus the Han Dynasty's Guan system was abolished, and everyone had to braid their hair (partially shaved, leaving only the back of the skull, and then braiding it).

Therefore, many people regard the Manchu jacket and women's qipao 旗袍 as traditional Chinese clothing. Antonia Finnane has also conducted related research on Chinese women's dress in the 20th century, discussing many questions about the qipao.⁴ This concept is popular not only in the West but also in China. Many Chinese regard the qipao as traditional Chinese dress. However, in fact, this opinion is not true. Chinese traditional dress is the Hanfu 漢服, which has been the main attire for Han people and has lasted for thousands of years. Therefore, I would like to research Hanfu and explore the dress uniform and its significance.

2. Determining the Research Topic

The topic of *the Records of Ritual* or the dress uniforms in the pre-Qin Dynasty are actually quite broad and may not be suitable for the word requirement of a Master's dissertation. The attire system of the pre-Qin Dynasty is complex and should be differentiated according to status, gender, occasion, and ceremony. Attire varies for the national leader, lord, dafu 大夫, scholar and common people, with distinctions between men and women. Additionally, accessories such as clothing, Guan, hu 笏, bi 韞, and jade are varied and abundant. Different occasions require different attire, such as the Guan Ceremony, Marriage

³ According to the Xia–Shang–Zhou Chronology Project. Xueqin, Li, 'The Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project: Methodology and Results,' *Journal of East Asian Archaeology*, 4.1 (2002), 321–333.

⁴ Finnane, Antonia, 'What Should Chinese Women Wear? A National Problem,' *Modern China*, 22.2 (1996), 99–131.

Ceremony, Sacrificial Ceremony, and Funeral Ceremony. Therefore, I need to focus my research topic and narrow it down.

To address this issue, I consulted with my supervisor, Professor Lin Suchuan. Prof. Lin advised that the topic should be narrowed down, and I should deeply read the text of Classics, establishing a strong foundation of academics. Prof. Lin provided several related topics, such as daily etiquette in chapter ‘quli’ 曲禮 and chapter ‘neize’ 內則, ceremonial dress in the Guan Ceremony and Marriage Ceremony, and accessories related to clothing such as the significance of jade and ritual education. Prof. Lin emphasized again the importance of basic texts of Classics. She hoped that I could find the topic that I was interested in from the *Records of Ritual*, which could improve my academic ability and thinking method.

I spent about three weeks reading *the Records of Ritual* and considered deeply. Subsequently, I chose the topic of the dress uniform of the Guan Ceremony. My topic focused on the dress uniform in the process of the Three Guan 三加, including Zibu Guan 緇布冠, Pibian Guan 皮弁冠, and Juebian Guan 爵弁冠, then exploring their significance. Prof. Lin also advised that I could discuss the clothing in the Three Guan as well.

The process of determining my dissertation topic lasted for roughly three weeks, from June 18th to July 6th, 2023.

3. Research Actuality

Chinese culture has lasted for five thousand years and possesses a vast and profound culture system. Qian Mu 錢穆 conclude that Li (rite 禮) is at the core of Chinese culture.

If we would like to understand the ritual and music system of ancient Chinese, we may research the Three Ritual Canons 三禮, which includes *the Records of Ritual*, *the Ceremonial Ritual* (Yili, 儀禮), and *the Rituals of Zhou* (Zhouli 周禮). The study of the Three Ritual Canons originated during the pre-Qin dynasty and flourished during Western Han (202 BCE–9 ACE) and Eastern Han Dynasties (25–220). During the Eastern Han Dynasty, there was a debate between Wang Su 王肅 and Zheng Xuan 鄭玄. Then in the Tang Dynasty (618–907), Emperor Taizong 唐太宗 commissioned Kong Yingda 孔穎達 to organize and

compile *the Five Confucian Classics* 五經正義. Zheng Xuan's annotations were used for *the Records of Ritual*, and later used for *the Ceremonial Ritual* in *the Nine Confucian Classics* 九經正義.

However, in subsequent generations, including the Song (960-1279), Yuan (1279-1368), and Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the study of the Three Ritual Canons faced challenges. Especially during the Song Dynasty, when there was a prevalent atmosphere of scepticism towards the Classics. People like to discuss the topic of Xuan 玄 and mysterious things. Only a few scholars focused on researching the Three Ritual Canon. During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the study of the Three Ritual Canons was in great prosperity. Scholars attached importance to text ology and collation science. So the text revision of *the Ceremonial Ritual* was the best version in all dynasties. In the meantime, many famous books about the Three Ritual Canons were written during this period.

For the modern China, because of wars and ideological reforms, the study of Classics 經學 and rites declined significantly. As Peng Lin 彭林 says, 'In recent years, the study of rites has developed unevenly and slowly advanced in extremely difficult circumstances.' Especially in the past thirty years, traditional Chinese academia has experienced rapid development, with some relatively obscure subjects such as Taoist studies and Dunhuang studies making significant progress. In contrast, the status of research on the Three Ritual Canons is unsatisfactory. Although the number of dissertations on this theme has sharply increased, there is a lack of outstanding works. He identified three reasons for this: First is the tradition of Classical study was fractured. Second is the style of study is impetuous, and scholars lack dedication. Third is the structure of knowledge is deficient.

In the Western academic community, scholars are keen on studying Sinology, and there are also many articles studying the Three Ritual Canons (like Puett's research). In fact, research on the Three Ritual Canons is extremely challenging because of its wide scope and complex content. Even the officials in the Four Treasuries 四庫館臣 stated that '*the Ceremonial Ritual* is very difficult to read.' 儀禮至為難讀 I also noticed that there is relatively less research on the ritual systems and the Ceremony process, such as the Guan Ceremony in the

pre-Qin Dynasty. But these studies are meaningful and valuable. Therefore, I hope to explore the research and focus on the field of the Three Ritual Canons.

4. Collection of Reference Books

After determining the dissertation topic, the next step is to collect as many reference books and journals as possible. I consulted two books about essay writing: Greetham Bryan's *How to Write Better Essays* and Foster Steve's *A Guide to Writing Essays and Answering Problem Questions*.⁵ Greetham outlines five stages for essay writing, including Question, research, planning, writing, and revision. This helped me establish an academic framework and become clearer about the essay writing process. Foster's book helped me develop problem awareness, and I learned to better use materials and locate sources from it.

Additionally, when reading Puett's article about the ritual theory of Classical China, I noticed that he focused particular attention on the texts of the 'Liyun' 禮運 chapter of *the Records of Ritual*.⁶ This is a very basic but important research method. As what Prof. Lin asked me to in-deeply read the Classics. I think I can also use this method for my dissertation.

The reference books mainly cover two aspects: the dress uniform and the significance of the Guan Ceremony. Because I am in the UK, acquiring many Chinese books can be challenging. For ancient Classics such as *the Records of Ritual*, *the Ceremonial Ritual*, and *the Rituals of Zhou*, I obtained scanned versions. Additionally, I purchased several books from China and posted to my university, including *Grand View of Ancient Chinese Clothing* 中國古代服飾大觀, *Study on Ancient Chinese Clothing* 中國古代服飾研究, *Research on Dress Uniform of the Marriage Ceremony of Shi Class* 士昏禮服飾考, *Study on the Ceremonial Process of the Marriage Ceremony and the Meeting Ceremony of Shi Class in the Ceremonial Ritua* 儀禮士昏禮士相見之禮儀節研究. Furthermore, I downloaded many relevant academic journals to further enrich my research.

⁵ Greetham, Bryan, *How to Write Better Essays*, Fifth edition. (London, UK ; Bloomsbury Academic, 2023). Foster, Steve, *Legal Writing Skills : A Guide to Writing Essays and Answering Problem Questions*, Fifth edition. (Harlow, England ; Pearson, 2019).

⁶ Puett, Michael, *Ritualization as domestication: Ritual theory from classical China* (Wiesbaden · Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 359-370.

I also had some books and journals which I could not access. Chen Xun who was my classmate in my undergraduate helped me a lot. He provided me the e-books of Dai Panghai's 戴龐海 *Study on the Guan Ceremony of Pre-Qin Dynasty* 先秦冠禮研究. Also, he went to the library of National Cheng Kung University to borrow the paper book of Ye Guoliang's 葉國良 *Study on the rite of Coming-to-age and related problems of Han nationality* 漢族成年禮及其相關問題研究 and scanned the whole book and sent it to me. He also asked his friend who was at National Taiwan University to obtain the dissertation of Lin Yingjun's 林盈君 'Dress Customs of Han Dynasty' 漢代衣冠禮俗.

I also had many questions in the process. How to use materials usefully and efficiently? How to locate my source? How to formulate questions from those references and solve them? The collection of reference books and journals was not an easy task. Only the collection of related materials took me about a month. But I also learned from the process, learning to determine the research area and find the information I needed from hundreds of books. I think this process is also an important foundation for my research, and I am quite thankful for my friends' help.

5. Writing Process and Challenges

The writing process is arduous and time-consuming. Throughout this process, I encountered many challenges:

1) Determining and focusing on the Topic.

My original topic was quite broad, so it took me three weeks to narrow it down with the assistance and guidance of Professor Lin.

2) Collecting References.

Many books are difficult to get. So it took me about one month to get all materials that I need.

3) Planning and Organizing the Whole Research Process.

I collaborated with my supervisor to establish a timeline for my dissertation, ensuring efficient planning and organization of the research process.

4) First-phase Preparations (reading related books and journals)

The preparation time is indeed challenging and time-consuming, involving the thorough reading of the Classics, relevant books and journals. It served as a crucial period for accumulating knowledge, establishing a framework, fostering problem awareness, and continuously refining academic perspectives.

It took me about two months to meticulously read *the Ceremonial Ritual* and its annotations and to conduct a deep analysis of the discussions on the dress uniform and the significance of the Guan Ceremony. Additionally, I drew relevant pictures of the dress uniforms and ceremony process for better understanding. When I read those reference materials, I also made notes of any doubts or disagreements. Then I asked my supervisor (some of the questions were resolved during the reading process). Despite the difficulty of interpreting ancient texts, this process proved invaluable as it provided me with a clear understanding and perspective on the entire Guan Ceremony. For the three Guan process, I gained a thorough understanding of the detailed process undergone by young individuals who attend the Guan Ceremony, enabling me to discern the differences in their uniforms compared to others.

Subsequently, I delved into *the Records of Ritual*, comparing the annotations of different scholars such as Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, Kong Yingda 孔穎達 and Sun Xidan 孫希旦. Their annotations proved to be invaluable for my research on the significance of the Guan Ceremony. Throughout this study, I gradually developed my own question awareness and personal perspectives.

Prof. Lin also advise me to consult Yang Kuan's 楊寬 article 'A new exploration of the Guan Ceremony' 冠禮新探 in *A New Exploration of Ancient History* 古史新探. It provides in-depth exploration of the Guan Ceremony from the perspective of folklore, offering essential explanations of the cultural significance of the Guan Ceremony. Ye Guoliang, Li Longxian and Peng Meiling's research on the Guan Ceremony are also useful and important.

I consult many books and article on dress uniform. For instance, Shen Congwen's 沈從文 *Study on Ancient Chinese Clothing*, Zhou Xun 周汛 and Gao Chunming's 高春明 *Grand View of Ancient Chinese Clothing*, Chen Ruigeng's 陳瑞庚 *Research on Dress Uniform of the Marriage Ceremony of Shi Class*, and Zhang Guangrui's 張光裕 *Study on the Ceremonial Process of the Marriage Ceremony and the Meeting Ceremony of Shi Class in the Ceremonial Ritua*. However, I must admit that reading these books on clothing research was challenging, requiring significant time and effort to distinguish and compare them. Additionally, I searched for related archaeological materials. For example, there is a Ming Dynasty costume culture exhibition at the Shandong Museum.⁷ In the exhibition there are lots of Hanfu, from shoes, clothing, jade to Guan, which were preserved in the Kong Family Mansion 孔府 before. Those attires prove specific dress uniform of Hanfu in the Ming Dynasty and are beneficial to the research on the dress uniform in the pre-Qin Dynasty.

After reading reference materials and collecting related questions, I compiled and summarized a document of roughly 88,000 to 110,000 words. Although it was very challenging, it indeed formed the solid foundation of my dissertation.

5) Writing Process

The writing process was relatively faster compared to the time-consuming task of reading materials. My dissertation took approximately a month to complete. Subsequently, it underwent three major revision processes before reaching its final form. Throughout this process, I sent five versions of the dissertation to my supervisor for feedback, including the Proposal, Dissertation Outline, and three revised versions. Many discussions occurred iteratively during each stage of the revision process.

I am deeply grateful to my supervisor for her invaluable guidance and assistance. She provided detailed suggestions on the direction, structure, and content of my dissertation.

⁷ Shandong Museum 山東博物館, *Digital exhibition hall of Ming Dynasty costume culture: Yiguan dacheng* 明代服飾文化展數字展廳：衣冠大成, <https://4dmodel.com/SuperTwoCustom/ShanDong/SuperTwo782/index.html?m=782>, accessed in 14th February 2024.

In particular, the initial draft of my dissertation exceeded 20,000 words, prompting my supervisor to offer numerous suggestions for refinement. Consequently, I made several revisions to ensure that the dissertation remained focused on the topic.

6) Oral Presentation

For this part, I dedicated considerable effort to preparation, focusing not only on revising the article but also on practicing my speech delivery.

Throughout the presentation process, both Prof. Lin and Prof. Huang Zhongtian provided me with numerous revision suggestions. These suggestions included:

- Searching and using the relevant records from *the Spring and Autumn Annals on Annals* (Chunqiu 春秋) and *Guoyu* 國語;
- Exploring the context of the public name (zi) from the pre-Qin culture, instead of the anthropological perspective;
- Refining the overall structural framework;
- Detailed suggestions, such as revising footnotes.

I greatly benefited from their feedback. Then I revised my dissertation in detail.

6. Research Results and Prospects

In conclusion, my research has resulted in a more in-depth exploration of the Guan Ceremony of the Shi Class in the Pre-Qin Dynasty. I find that Hanfu is a very interesting field worthy of further study, and I also hope to continue conducting in-depth research on it in the future. Additionally, while the study of the Three Ritual Canons requires significant time and effort, the significance of rites remains valuable, and the Guan Ceremony still holds its unique value and significance today.'

At the same time, the most significant gain for me is the academic writing training. Throughout this process, I have my ideas for academic thinking and methods. I think the writing process of a graduation dissertation is another learning process of academic writing. I received a lot of guidance and detailed suggestions from my supervisor in all aspects, which was a great pleasure for me. Through this process, I learned a lot about academic writing,

which has helped me gain a deeper understanding of academia. Although the academic expertise, thinking, framework, and ability of my professor, whether in depth or breadth, are currently beyond my reach, I am committed to continuing my learning journey and working hard.

I have learned to focus on specific topics, select appropriate materials, conduct thorough readings of classic texts, analyze academic journals, continuously revise and improve articles, and delve deeper into their meanings throughout the writing process. During my undergraduate years, I also wrote papers on the Marriage Ceremony and the Archery Ceremony of the Shi Class in the pre-Qin Dynasty. However, at that time, my essays were not of high quality, and my academic abilities were not comprehensive. Through my academic training over the years, I believe my skills have greatly improved. Now, when reading academic journals, I can analyze them from an academic perspective, paying attention to writing structure, coherence, writing methods, and how to effectively conclude.

In summary, I deeply appreciate the guidance and support of my supervisor and classmates, as well as the effort I dedicated to writing this dissertation. I look forward to furthering my studies and advancing in the research field of the Three Ritual Canons in the future.