

# Philip Thai

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<https://cssh.northeastern.edu/people/faculty/philip-thai/>

## Academic Appointments

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### Northeastern University

Director, Global Asian Studies Program	2021–22, 2023–present
Associate Professor, Department of Cultures, Societies, and Global Studies	2021–present
Associate Professor, Department of History	2019–present
Assistant Professor, Department of History	2013–19

## Education

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### Stanford University

Ph.D., Department of History 2013

### University of California, Berkeley

B.A., Department of History (Highest Honors), Minor in Asian Studies 2000

## Publications

### Books

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- In the Shadows the Bamboo Curtain: Trade, Travel, and Trafficking across Greater China during the Cold War* In progress
- China's War on Smuggling: Law, Economic Life, and the Making of the Modern State, 1842–1965.* Columbia University Press, Study of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute. 2018  
<https://cup.columbia.edu/book/a/9780231185844>

### Articles and Book Chapters

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- “Hong Kong in the U.S.-UK War on Drugs, 1970–1980,” *Diplomatic History* 47:1: 19–54. 2023  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhac069>
- “A Risky Business: The Tai Ping Insurance Company and Fire Insurance in China, 1928–1937,” *Enterprise and Society* 21.1: 239–76. <https://doi.org/10.1017/eso.2020.47>  
\*Winner, 2023 Business History Conference (BHC) Philip Scranton Best Article Prize
- “Smuggling and Legal Pluralism on the China Coast: The Rise and Demise of the Joint Investigation Rules, 1864–1934,” in Clara Wing-chung Ho, Ricardo K. S. Mak, and Yue-him Tam, eds., *Voyages, Migration, and the Maritime World: On China's Global Historical Role*: 165–85. De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110587685> 2018
- “Introduction,” in “Binding Maritime China: Control, Evasion, and Interloping” (special issue guest editor with Eugenio Menegon and Xing Hang), *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Cultural Review* 7.1, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ach.2018.0000> 2018

- “Old Menace in New China: Coastal Smuggling, Illicit Markets, and Symbiotic Economies in the Early People’s Republic,” *Modern Asian Studies* 51.5: 1561–97. 2017  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X16000688>
- “Law, Sovereignty, and the War on Smuggling in Coastal China, 1928–1937,” *Law and History Review* 34.1: 75–114. 2016  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0738248015000668>
- Book Reviews and Review Essays**
- 
- “The U.S. Covert War in China,” review essay of *Agents of Subversion: The Fate of John T. Downey and the CIA’s Covert War in China*, by John Delury. *Diplomatic History*. (forthcoming) 2023
- Review of *China and the End of Global Silver, 1873–1937*, by Austin Dean. *Journal of Asian Studies* 80.4: 1056–58. 2021  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911821001650>
- Review of *Market Maoists: The Communist Origins of China’s Capitalist Ascent*, by Jason M. Kelly. *Business History Review* 95.3: 601–04. 2021  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007680521000660>
- Review of *Inheritance of Loss: The Political Economy of Redemption after Empire*, by Yukiko Koga. *Enterprise and Society* 20.4: 1103–05. 2019  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/eso.2018.76>
- Review of *Legal Lessons: Popularizing Laws in the People’s Republic of China, 1949–1989*, by Jennifer Altehenger. *The PRC History Review* 13. [http://prchistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Altehenger\\_review.pdf](http://prchistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Altehenger_review.pdf) 2019
- Review of *Empires of Coal: Fueling China’s Entry into the Modern World Order, 1860–1920*, by Shellen Xiao Wu. *The Economic History Review* 69.3: 1048–49. 2016  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ehr.12412>
- “Japan in Maritime Asia: Security, Commerce, and Sovereignty,” review essay of *Defensive Positions: The Politics of Maritime Security in Tokugawa Japan*, by Noell Wilson, and *Empires on the Waterfront: Japan’s Ports and Power, 1858–1899*, by Catherine L. Phipps. *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Cultural Review* 17: 123–30. 2015  
<https://cross-currents.berkeley.edu/e-journal/issue-17/hipps-wilson>
- Review of *Grounds of Judgment: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan*, by Pär K. Cassel. *Journal of Asian Studies* 74.2: 459–60. 2015  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911815000133>
- Review of *Contraband: Louis Mandrin and the Making of a Global Underground*, by Michael Kwass. *Enterprise and Society* 15.3: 593–95. 2014  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1467222700016001>
- Review of *Paths toward the Modern Fiscal State: England, Japan, and China*, by Wenkai He. *Journal of Asian Studies* 75.4: 975–77. 2013  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911813001241>

## Other Publications and Projects

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“Chinese Legal History: An Overview,” Legal History Blog. <a href="https://legalhistoryblog.blogspot.com/2021/10/chinese-legal-history-overview.html">https://legalhistoryblog.blogspot.com/2021/10/chinese-legal-history-overview.html</a>	2021
“Influenza Pandemics and Global Health in the Cold War,” Northeastern University College of Social Sciences and Humanities (CSSH) Pandemic Teaching Initiative Module. <a href="https://cssh.northeastern.edu/pandemic-teaching-initiative/disease-diplomacy-and-science-in-the-cold-war-lessons-for-future-pandemics/">https://cssh.northeastern.edu/pandemic-teaching-initiative/disease-diplomacy-and-science-in-the-cold-war-lessons-for-future-pandemics/</a>	2020
“The Proven Solution to Pandemics President Trump Continues to Reject,” <i>The Washington Post</i> . <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/05/19/prove-solution-pandemics-that-president-trump-continues-reject/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/05/19/prove-solution-pandemics-that-president-trump-continues-reject/</a>	2020
“Comment les droits de douane ont aidé à construire la Chine moderne” (How tariffs helped build modern China), <i>Le Grand Continent</i> . <a href="https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2020/01/16/comment-les-droits-de-douane-ont-aide-a-construire-la-chine-moderne/">https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2020/01/16/comment-les-droits-de-douane-ont-aide-a-construire-la-chine-moderne/</a>	2020
“Xiandai Zhongguo jisi shi shuxie de licheng, wenti yu keneng” 现代中国缉私史书写的历程、问题与可能 (The course, problems, and possibilities of writing the history of anti-smuggling in modern China), <i>Guangzhou Daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)</i> 广州大学学报 (社会科学版) (Journal of Guangzhou University (social science edition)) 18.6: 108–12. <a href="http://xb-sk.gzhu.edu.cn/CN/volumn/volumn_1199.shtml">http://xb-sk.gzhu.edu.cn/CN/volumn/volumn_1199.shtml</a>	2019
“Tariffs and Unintended Consequences: The Case of China’s War on Smuggling,” Columbia University Press Blog. <a href="http://www.cupblog.org/2018/07/19/tariffs-and-unintended-consequences-the-case-of-chinas-war-on-smuggling/">http://www.cupblog.org/2018/07/19/tariffs-and-unintended-consequences-the-case-of-chinas-war-on-smuggling/</a>	2018
“Falü, zhuquan yu Zhongguo yanhai jisi zhi zhan” 法律、主权与中国沿海的缉私之战 (Law, Sovereignty, and the War on Smuggling in Coastal China), <i>Falü shi yiping</i> 法律史译评 (Legal history studies) 5: 333–62.	2017
“Overseas Chinese, Coastal Smuggling, and Legal Pluralism in the People’s Republic of China,” H-Net World Legal History Blog. <a href="https://networks.h-net.org/node/16794/blog/world-legal-history-blog/142600/overseas-chinese-coastal-smuggling-and-legal">https://networks.h-net.org/node/16794/blog/world-legal-history-blog/142600/overseas-chinese-coastal-smuggling-and-legal</a>	2016

## Fellowships and Awards

### Post-doctoral

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Business History Conference (BHC) Philip Scranton Best Article Prize	2023
American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Frederick Burkhardt Fellowship, for residence at Harvard Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study	2022–23
American Philosophical Society (APS), Franklin Research Grant	2019
National Central Library (Taiwan) Center for Chinese Studies (CCS) Research Grant	2019
Northeastern University Humanities Center Faculty Fellowship	2018–19
Association for Asian Studies (AAS) First Book Subvention Award	2017
Northeastern University Richard and Arlene Offenbergs History Faculty Fund	2017

Northeastern University College of Social Sciences and Humanities (CSSH) Dean's Research Development Initiative Award	2016
Northeastern University Asian Studies Research Award	2016
Henry Luce Foundation/ACLS China Studies Postdoctoral Fellowship	2015–16
J. Willard Hurst Summer Institute in Legal History Institute Fellow	2015
Yale University Council on East Asian Studies (CEAS) Postdoctoral Fellowship (declined)	2015–16
Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Fellowship (declined)	2015
Northeastern University Asian Studies Curriculum Award	2015
National Central Library (Taiwan) Center for Chinese Studies (CCS) Research Grant	2014
Law and Society Association (LSA) Career Workshop Grant	2014
Northeastern University Humanities Center Program Award	2014

### Pre-doctoral

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Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation Doctoral Fellowship	2012–13
Freeman Spogli Institute (FSI) China Studies Dissertation Grant	2012–13
Stanford University Department of History Weter Fellowship	2012
Freeman Spogli Institute (FSI) China Studies Dissertation Grant	2011–12
Stanford University Department of History Distinguished Scholar	2009–10
Stanford University Department of History Graduate Student Fellowship	2006–11
Business History Conference (BHC) Oxford Journals Doctoral Colloquium in Business History Grant	2011
Social Science Research Council (SSRC) International Dissertation Research Fellowship (IDRF)	2010
Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad (DDRA) Fellowship	2009–10
Stanford University Graduate School of Humanities and Sciences Graduate Research Opportunity (GRO) Fellowship	2009
Blakemore-Freeman Fellowship for Advanced Asian Language Study	2006–07
University of California Berkeley Department of History Highest Honors	2000
<i>Berkeley Undergraduate Journal</i> Best Paper Prize for “The Quiet Revolution and the ICAC: The Search for Legitimacy in Hong Kong in the 60s and 70s”	2000
University of California President's Undergraduate Research Fellowship	1999–2000

### Interviews

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Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard on China Podcast. <a href="https://soundcloud.com/fairbank-center/chinas-war-on-smuggling-with-philip-thai">https://soundcloud.com/fairbank-center/chinas-war-on-smuggling-with-philip-thai</a>	2021
American Society for Legal History, Legal History Podcast. <a href="https://legalhistorypodcast.podbean.com/e/episode-22-philip-thai/">https://legalhistorypodcast.podbean.com/e/episode-22-philip-thai/</a>	2020
Northeastern University Library, What's New Podcast. <a href="https://whatsnewpodcast.org/how-tariffs-made-modern-china/">https://whatsnewpodcast.org/how-tariffs-made-modern-china/</a>	2020
New Books Network (NBn), East Asian Studies Podcast. <a href="https://newbooksnetwork.com/philip-thai-chinas-war-on-smuggling-law-economic-life-and-the-making-of-the-modern-state-1842-1965-columbia-up-2018/">https://newbooksnetwork.com/philip-thai-chinas-war-on-smuggling-law-economic-life-and-the-making-of-the-modern-state-1842-1965-columbia-up-2018/</a>	2018

- Columbia University, Weatherhead East Asian Institute (WEAI) Q&A. 2018  
<http://weai.columbia.edu/weai-author-qa-philip-thai-chinas-war-on-smuggling/>
- Northeastern University, Breaking History Podcast. 2016  
<https://breakinghistorypodcast.com/2016/10/16/episode-7-history-of-smuggling-in-china-with-philip-thai/>

## Select Presentations

### Invited Lectures

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- “The China Resources Company and Cold War Hong Kong,” Hong Kong Polytechnic University 2023
- “Fighting Containment with Colonial Law: The Strange Career of Percy Chen in Cold War Hong Kong,” American Bar Foundation (ABF) 2023
- “From Vice City to Valuable Ally: Hong Kong, Social Transformation, and the Anglo-American War on Drugs, 1970–1980,” University of Missouri-Columbia 2022
- “Communist China’s Capitalist Front: The China Resources Company in Cold War Hong Kong,” Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University 2022
- “Smuggling and State Power in Modern China,” Global China Humanities Lecture Series, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) 2021
- “Disease, Diplomacy, and Science in the Cold War: Lessons for Future Pandemics,” College of Social Sciences and Humanities (CSSH), Northeastern University 2021
- “Vice City: Hong Kong in the Anglo-American War on Drugs, 1970–1979,” Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (HKIHSS) 2021
- “China’s War on Smuggling: Law, Economic Life, and the Making of the Modern State,” International Society for Chinese Law and History (ISCLH) 2020
- “Tariffs, Statecraft, and Smuggling on the China Coast, 1842–1943,” Asian Studies Program and Department of History, Boston College 2020
- “China’s War on Smuggling: Law, Economic Life, and the Making of the Modern State,” The Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington 2019
- “China’s War on Smuggling: Law, Economic Life, and the Making of the Modern State,” Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan 2019
- “Xin Zhongguo de yanhai zousi, feifa shichang yu gongsheng jingji (1950–1965)” 新中國的沿海走私、非法市場與共生經濟 (Coastal smuggling, illicit markets, and symbiotic economies in new China), National Central Library (Taiwan) (in Chinese) 2019
- “China’s War on Smuggling: Law, Economic Life, and the Making of the Modern State,” Center for East Asian Studies (CEAS), Stanford University 2019
- “China’s War on Smuggling in Historical Perspective,” Department of History, Brandeis University 2019
- “Trans-Asian Encounters and China’s War on Smuggling,” Asia Center, Harvard University 2018
- “Legal Shades of Gray: Coastal Trafficking, Underground Markets, and Symbiotic Economies in Socialist China,” Legal History Colloquium, Vanderbilt University 2016

- “Old Menace in New China: Coastal Smuggling and Illicit Markets under Early Communist Rule,” Institute for Chinese Studies, Ohio State University (OSU) 2015
- “Illicit Economies on the Chinese Coast: An Historical Perspective,” D'Amore-McKim School of Business, Northeastern University 2014
- “Falü, guojia jianshe yu Zhongguo yanhai jisi zhi zhan” 法律、國家建設與中國沿海緝私之戰, (Law, state-building, and the war on smuggling in coastal China”), National Central Library (Taiwan) (in Chinese) 2014
- “The War on Smuggling in Coastal China: Law, Policing, and State-Building,” Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University 2013

### Conferences

- “Evading Embargoes: Chinese Front Companies in Cold War Hong Kong,” Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) Annual Conference 2023
- “Circumventing Containment: Front Companies in Cold War Hong Kong and Macau,” Association for Asian Studies (AAS) Annual Conference 2023
- “Bypassing the Bamboo Curtain: Chinese Front Companies in Cold War Hong Kong,” American Historical Association (AHR) Annual Conference 2023
- “New Directions in Chinese Business History and Economic Life,” American Historical Association (AHR) Colloquium 2021
- “Vice City: Hong Kong in the Anglo-American War on Drugs, 1970–1979,” Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) Annual Conference (canceled) 2020
- “Author-Meets-Readers: Philip Thai’s *China’s War on Smuggling: Law, Economic Life, and the Making of the Modern State, 1842–1965*,” American Society for Legal History (ASLH) Annual Conference 2019
- “Fire Sale: Retailing, Marketing, and Conceptualizing Property Insurance in Modern China,” Association for Asian Studies (AAS) Annual Conference 2018
- Roundtable on “Economic Life in Chinese History: New Research Directions,” New England Region Association for Asian Studies (NEAAS) Annual Conference 2017
- “Smuggling and Legal Pluralism on the China Coast: The Rise and Demise of the Joint Investigation Rules,” American Society for Legal History (ASLH) Annual Conference 2016
- “Old Menace in New China: Coastal Smuggling and Illicit Markets in the Early People’s Republic,” Association for Asian Studies (AAS) Annual Conference 2016
- “Smuggling and Legal Pluralism on the China Coast: The Rise and Demise of the Joint Investigation Rules,” “Voyages, Migration and the Maritime Silk Road: An International Symposium on China’s Role in Global History,” Hong Kong Baptist University 2015
- “Smuggler, Peddler, Patriot, Spy: Illicit Coastal Trade in the Early People’s Republic,” “Doing Business across Borders,” Hagley Museum and Library 2015
- “‘One Complementing the Other’: Legal Reforms, Illicit Businesses, and the War on Smuggling,” “Globalism and the Law in Historical Perspective,” Legal History Consortium Conference, Indiana University Maurer School of Law 2015

“Binding Maritime China: Control, Evasion, and Interloping,” Co-organized with Boston University and Brandeis University	2015
“Smuggling and Interdiction along Coastal China,” Association for Asian Studies (AAS) Annual Conference	2013
“Legal Sovereignty and the War on Smuggling in Coastal China,” American Historical Association (AHA) Annual Conference	2013
“Law, Business, and the War on Smuggling in Coastal China,” Business History Conference (BHC)	2012
“Law, State-Building, and the War on Smuggling in Coastal China,” Association for Asian Studies (AAS) Annual Conference	2012

### Workshops

“Formal Barriers, Informal Commerce: Economic Connections in Greater China during the Cold War,” International Society for Chinese Legal History (ISCLH) Research Workshop, Yale Law School	2018
“Anti-Smuggling Campaigns and the Expansion of State Authority on the China Coast,” “Maritime Asia: Securitization of the China Seas in the 19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> Centuries,” Institute of East Asian Studies (IEAS), University of California, Berkeley	2018
“Things Fall Apart? State Re-Building and New Geographies of Coastal Smuggling in Civil War China,” “New Perspectives on the Chinese Civil War,” Council on East Asian Studies (CEAS), Yale University	2016
“Unscrupulous Merchants, Illicit Joint Ventures, and the Business of Smuggling,” “Rethinking Business History in Modern China, 1839–1937,” Institute of Chinese Studies, Freie Universität Berlin	2014
“Smuggling is a Business’: Regulations, Sovereignty, and Markets,” “Rethinking the Market in Modern China,” Joint Center for History and Economics, Harvard University	2014
“Law, State-Building, and the War on Smuggling in Coastal China,” “International Workshop on Chinese Legal History, Culture, and Modernity,” Columbia University	2012

### Discussant and Chair

Chair, “Legal and Intellectual Constructs of Empire,” “Law and Empire in the Sino-Asian Context” Workshop, Co-hosted by American Society for Legal History (ASLH), International Society for Chinese Law and History (ISCLH), and Harvard Law School Program in East Asian Studies	2019
Discussant and Chair, “Smuggling, Violence, and State in East Asian Maritime World,” Association for Asian Studies (AAS) Annual Conference	2019
Discussant and Chair, “Reading Legal Texts in Chinese History: Sources, Materiality, and Authority,” American Society for Legal History (ASLH) Annual Conference	2018
Chair, “The Chinese Question: Gold Rushes and Global Politics,” talk by Mae Ngai (Columbia University), Harvard University Asia Center	2017

Chair, “Revolution at the Canteen: Food and Labor Politics in Industrial China, 1910s–1950s,” talk by Seung-joon Lee (National University of Singapore), Harvard-Yenching Institute	2014
Discussant and Chair, “Riots, Rights, and Radicals: Social Movements and Memory,” Northeastern University World History Conference	2014
Discussant and Chair, “Comparative Studies of Tax Policy Regimes,” Social Science History Association (SSHA) Annual Conference	2013

## Academic Service

### Profession

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Member, Scranton Prize Committee, Business History Conference (BHC)	2024–present
Member, Nominating Committee, American Historical Association (AHA)	2022–present
Book Review Editor, Modern China Section, <i>Journal of Asian Studies</i>	2020–22
Member, Finance Committee, American Society for Legal History (ASLH)	2019–present
Chair, Development Committee, International Society for Chinese Law and History (ISCLH)	2014–21

### Institution

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Chair, Northeastern University College of Social Sciences and Humanities (CSSH), Asian American Studies Search	2021–22
Member, Northeastern University Presidential Council on Diversity and Inclusion (DEI)	2021–22
Member, Northeastern University College of Social Sciences and Humanities (CSSH), Civic Sustainability, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Council	2021–22
Member, Northeastern University College of Social Sciences and Humanities (CSSH), Tenure and Promotion Advisory Committee	2020–22
Member, Executive Committee, Northeastern University Asian Studies Program	2014–present

### Department

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Member, Northeastern University Department of History Undergraduate Curriculum Committee	2014, 2017–19
Member, Northeastern University Department of History Graduate Admissions Committee	2016–2019
Member, Northeastern University Department of History Faculty Advisory Committee on Salaries (FACS)	2015

### Other Education

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Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), Yale-China Chinese Language Center (CLC)	2009
Tsinghua University (Beijing, China), Inter-University Program (IUP) for Advanced Chinese Language Studies	2006–07
University of California, Berkeley Extension, Certification in Corporate Finance with Distinction	2001–02
Peking University (Beijing, China), University of California Education Abroad Program (EAP)	1998–99



## Reviewer

*Law and History Review, Modern Asian Studies, Modern China*, Columbia University Weatherhead East Asian Institute (WEAI), University of Hawai'i Press

## Courses Taught

ASNS/HIST 1150: East Asian Studies  
CLTR/HIST 1500: Modern Chinese History and Culture  
HIST 2308: Law, Justice, and Society in Modern China  
HIST 2360: History of Capitalism in East Asia  
HIST 3330: The Global Cold War

## Languages

Mandarin: Advanced fluency  
Cantonese: Native speaker  
Japanese: Reading knowledge

## Technical Skills

Geographic Information System (GIS), SPSS, and Excel (advanced statistical functions)  
Oracle Certified Programmer for the Java 2 Platform  
Passed Level I Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Exam

## Professional Affiliations

American Historical Association (AHA)  
American Society for Legal History (ASLH)  
Association for Asian Studies (AAS)  
Business History Conference (BHC)  
Harvard University Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies Associate in Research  
Historical Society for Twentieth-Century China (HSTCC)  
International Society for Chinese Law and History (ISCLH)  
Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR)

## References

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Wen-hsin Yeh  
Richard H. and Laurie C. Morrison Professor  
Department of History  
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