

Call for papers

January 20, 2025

**Repay Resentment with Straightforwardness? Exploring Revenge in the Chinese Context**  
 KU Leuven (Belgium), July 1-3, 2025

From antiquity to the present, rarely has a topic been discussed as widely in China as revenge. Literature, philosophy, law, theater, cinema, and many more fields have dealt with revenge for over two millennia and continue to negotiate it to this day. While in philosophical texts often described as governed by ritual and specific rules, revenge can likewise be rampant, brutal, and used to defy social and political expectations, as found in Chinese novels and contemporary movies. Folk tales portray outlaws as heroes for taking revenge, whereas lawful state servants become the target of the joke. Conversely, the Triads operate outside the boundaries of the law, while their actions strictly conform to their self-imposed ritual codices, such as when and how to take revenge. And Chinese opera and theater have long used revenge for entertainment, while in recent years consumers have used entertainment products for revenge buying. Revenge can clearly be used to criticize power structures and renegotiate accepted norms but is similarly governed by its own set of rules. But how do such opposites—rules and the unruly, entertainment and brutality, ritual and defiance of norms—go together and relate to one another within the act of revenge? And how might the tension between such opposites be dissolved? How did revenge become such an influential cultural trope in China? What is revenge used for in all these different contexts? And how did it change over the long history from early China to the present day?

In this workshop, we seek to study revenge in all fields of the Chinese socio-cultural realm to uncover its many facets and the relations between them. Therefore, we invite participants to explore the topic of revenge from various angles and with creative approaches, hoping to cover methodologies from diverse fields, including but not limited to: Anthropology, sociology, literature studies, philosophy, theater studies, history, political sciences, archaeology, criminology etc. We welcome both case studies as well as wider theoretical reflections on the nature of revenge in China.



Examples for possible topics and/or case studies:

- Pre-modern literature: *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳, *Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義, or *Jin ping mei* 金瓶梅
- Folk tales: the Zhao Orphan (Zhao Gu 趙孤) in the *Shiji* 史記 or Gan Jiang 干將 and Mo Ye 莫邪 in the *Soushen ji* 搜神記
- Contemporary (online) novels, where *fuchou* 復仇 (revenge) constitutes a whole genre
- Philosophy: *Lunyu* 論語, *Mengzi* 孟子, *Liji* 禮記, Hu Anguo's 胡安國 *Hushi Chunqiu zhuan* 胡氏春秋傳, Kong Guangsen's 孔廣森 *Chunqiu Gongyang jingzhuan tongyi* 春秋公羊經傳通義, and Jiang Qing's 蔣慶 *Gongyangxue yinlun* 公羊學引論
- Chinese opera: *Wu Zixu* 伍子胥, *Shen Xue'e baochou* 申雪娥報仇, or *Qingding zhu* 慶頂珠
- Laws, penal codes and juridical documents: *Xing'an huilan* 刑案匯覽 or *Daqing lüli* 大清律例
- Movies: Taiwanese 80s Black Movies (*hei dianying* 黑電影), Xu Bing's 徐冰 *Qingting zhi yan* 蜻蜓之眼 (Dragonfly Eyes, 2017), or Su Huiyu's 蘇匯宇 *Nüxing de fuchou* 女性的復仇 (The Women's Revenge, 2020)
- Social phenomena: revenge buying/shopping and the recent surge in revenge on society
- On a theoretical level: What forms of revenge do we find in China? What other concepts (like shame (*chi* 恥), human relationships (*renlun* 人論), and righteousness (*yi* 義)) appear in relation to revenge, and why? Could two separate systems of revenge (co)exist in China (e.g. by the state and by other social groups) that stand in tension with one another?

If you are interested in exploring the topic of revenge with us, please send your title and abstract (max. 250 words) before February 20, 2025 to [markussamuel.haselbeck@kuleuven.be](mailto:markussamuel.haselbeck@kuleuven.be).



Practical information:

1. Languages: The workshop language is English.
2. Format: We ask that participants submit their paper in advance. During the workshop, each presentation (10 min) gets a response by another participant (10 min), followed by general discussion (40 min). Each paper will thus be allotted one hour.
3. Accommodation and transportation: We provide accommodation for three nights (July 1-4) in Leuven. We also cover the transportation costs of the participants who do not have their own funding budgets. Please, let us know if that is the case.
4. Timeline:

By February 20, 2025	Abstract submission
By March 1, 2025	Notification of acceptance
By March 15, 2025	Confirmation of attendance and specifics of hotel accommodation
By June 1, 2025	Draft paper submission. All draft papers are distributed among the participants only
July 1-3, 2025	Workshop

For any remaining question, please feel free to contact Markus Haselbeck ([markussamuel.haselbeck@kuleuven.be](mailto:markussamuel.haselbeck@kuleuven.be))

Markus 趙澤煊 and Carine 戴卡琳