

Charles Sanft

Professor of History
University of Tennessee
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Current position

August 2020 – present, Professor, Department of History, University of Tennessee

External affiliation

April 2022 – present, Associate, Kenneth G. Lieberthal and Richard H. Rogel Center
for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan

University degrees

2011 Habilitation and *venia legendi*, Chinese Studies, University of Münster
2005 Doctorate, *summa cum laude*, Chinese Studies, University of Münster
2000 MA, Chinese, University of Minnesota
1996 BA, History and East Asian Studies, University of Minnesota

Additional education

Paideia Institute (2020-2022, 2023, 2024-2025, online), Latin language
Warburg Institute (2022-2024, online), Latin language, Latin paleography
London International Palaeography Summer School (online summer 2022, summer
2023), Latin paleography
University of Washington (2000-2002), Chinese literature
Nankai University (1994-1995), Chinese language

Honors and awards – external

2025-2026 Carl Friedrich von Siemens Research Award (*Carl Friedrich von Siemens-Forschungspreis*), Alexander von Humboldt Foundation
2024 University of Michigan Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies Asia Library
Travel Grant
2021 Joseph Levenson Pre-1900 China Book Prize Honorable Mention, Association for
Asian Studies
2020 James Henry Breasted Book Prize, American Historical Association
2017-2018 American Council of Learned Societies Fellowship
2017-2018 National Humanities Center Fellowship (declined)
2014 Duke University East Asian Library Travel Grant
2011 Member, School of Historical Studies, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton
2006–2008 Japan Society for the Promotion of Science post-doctoral fellowship

Honors and awards – University of Tennessee

2024 David V. and Kathryn G. White Undergraduate Teaching Award, University of
Tennessee
2024 College of Arts and Sciences New Research, Scholarly, and Creative Projects in
the Arts & Humanities Award, University of Tennessee
2021-2023, 2023-2025 Lindsay Young Professor, University of Tennessee

2022-2023 University of Tennessee Humanities Center faculty fellowship
 2019 University of Tennessee College of Arts and Sciences Mid-Career Research
 Excellence Award
 2016-2017 University of Tennessee Teaching Innovation Grant
 2016 University of Tennessee Thomas Jefferson Prize for Faculty Research
 2014-2015 University of Tennessee Humanities Center faculty fellowship
 2014 University of Tennessee Chancellor's Grant for Faculty Research

Monographs

Literate Community in Early Imperial China: The Northwestern Frontier in Han Times
 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019). Winner of the James
 Henry Breasted Prize, American Historical Association.
Communication and Cooperation in Early Imperial China: Publicizing the Qin Dynasty
 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014).

Articles, chapters, and notes

- “Silences: Imperial Utterance in Excavated Han Documents from Jianshui Jinguan,”
Journal of Asian History 58 (2024): 67-88.
- “Traces of Han and Roman Frontiers: Documents from Vindolanda and Jianshui
 Jinguan,” in *Place and Performance in Ancient Greece, Rome, and China*, ed.
 Hans Beck and Griet Vankeerberghen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
 2024), 378-409.
- “Sanjiaowei M1: Hand Tools from the Grave of a Hobbyist Woodworker,” in *Bone,
 Bronze, and Bamboo*, ed. Susan R. Blader, Constance Cook, Christopher Foster
 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2024), 293-309.
- “‘Rhapsody on the Ershi General Spring’ (Ershi quan fu 貳師泉賦) from Mogaoku,
 Dunhuang: Introduction and Translation,” *Journal of the American Oriental
 Society* 142.2 (2022): 293-310.
- “Violence in Early Chinese History,” in *The Cambridge History of Violence, Volume 1:
 The Prehistoric and Ancient Worlds*, ed. Garrett G. Fagan et al. (Cambridge:
 Cambridge University Press, 2020), 418-437.
- “Change and Continuity at the Intersection of Received History and the Material
 Record During the Warring States Period,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early
 China*, ed. Elizabeth Childs-Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020),
 623-636.
- “Questions about the Qi Lunyu,” *T'oung Pao* 104.1-2 (2018): 189-194.
- “The Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE),” in *Routledge Handbook of Imperial Chinese
 History*, ed. Victor Cunrui Xiong and Kenneth J. Hammond (London: Routledge,
 2018), 12-24.
- “The Qin Dynasty,” in *Routledge Handbook of Early Chinese History*, ed. Paul R.
 Goldin (London: Routledge, 2018), 146-59.
- “Concepts of Law in the Shangshu,” in *Origins of Chinese Political Philosophy: Studies
 in the Composition and Thought of the Shangshu (Classic of Documents)*, ed.
 Martin Kern and Dirk Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 446-74.
- “Jia Yi and the Management of the Populace,” *Asia Major* (third series) 29.2 (2016):
 47-71.

- “Evaluating Swords: Introduction and Translation of a How-to Guide from the Han-Xin Period,” *Early China* 39 (2016): 231-53.
- “Population Records from Liye: Ideology in Practice,” in *Ideology of Power and Power of Ideology in Early China*, ed. Yuri Pines, Paul R. Goldin, and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 249-69.
- “Paleographic Evidence of Qin Religious Practice from Liye and Zhoujia tai,” *Early China* 37 (2014): 327-358.
- “Shang Yang Was a Cooperator,” *Philosophy East and West* 64.1 (2014): 174-91.
- “Qin Government: Structures, Principles, and Practices,” in *Qin – The Eternal Emperor and His Terracotta Warriors*, ed. Maria Khayutina (Zürich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung Libro, 2013), 118-29.
- “Send Shoes: A Letter from Yuan to Zifang,” *Renditions: A Chinese-English Translation Magazine* 79 (2013): 7-10.
- “Debating the Route of the Qin Direct Road (Zhidaoyuan): Text and Excavation,” *Frontiers of History in China* 6.3 (2011): 323-46.
- “The Moment of Dying: Representations in Liu Xiang’s Anthologies *Xin xu* and *Shuo yuan*,” *Asia Major* (third series) 24.1 (2011): 127-58.
- “Dong Zhongshu’s *Chunqiu jueyu* Reconsidered: On the Legal Interest in Subjective States and the Privilege of Hiding Family Members’ Crimes as Developments from Earlier Practice,” *Early China* 33-34 (2010-11): 141-69. Published in Chinese as “Dui Dong Zhongshu ‘Chunqiu jueyu’ de zai sikao: cong zaoqi shijian de fazhan kan falü dui zhuguan zhuangtai de guanzhu yu yinman jiating chengyuan zuixing de tequan” 對董仲舒“春秋決獄”的再思考：從早期實踐的發展看法律對主觀狀態的關注與隱瞞家庭成員罪行的特權, transl. Yang Yuying 楊玉英, *Hanji yu Hanxue* 漢籍與漢學 1 (2024): 36-55.
- “Categories and Legal Reasoning in Early Imperial China: The Meaning of *Fa* in Recovered Texts,” with Miranda Brown, *Oriens Extremus* 49 (2010): 283-306.
- “Environment and Law in Early Imperial China (3rd c. BCE - 1st c. CE): Qin and Han Statutes Concerning Natural Resources,” *Environmental History* 15.4 (2010): 701-21.
- “Law and Communication in Qin and Western Han China,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53.5 (2010): 679-711. Published in Chinese as “Qinchao he Xihan de falü yu chuanbo” 秦朝和西漢的法律與傳播, transl. Ma Teng 馬騰 and Lei Guiwang 雷桂旺, in *Falüshi yiping (2014 nian juan)* 法律史譯評 (2014 年卷), ed. Zhou Dongping 周東平 and Ma Teng (Beijing: Zhongguo zhengfa daxue chubanshe, 2015), 44-66.
- “Jia Yi,” in *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Classical Chinese Writers, Pre-Tang Era (-598)*, ed. Curtis Dean Smith (Columbia: Brucoli Clark Layman, 2011), 78-83.
- “Edict of Monthly Ordinances for the Four Seasons in Fifty Articles from 5 C.E.: Introduction to the Wall Inscription Discovered at Xuanquanzhi, with Annotated Translation,” *Early China* 32 (2008-9): 125-208.
- “The Construction and Deconstruction of Epanggong: Notes from the Crossroads of History and Poetry,” *Oriens Extremus* 47 (2008): 160-76.
- “Notes on Penal Ritual and Subjective Truth under the Qin,” *Asia Major* (third series) 22.1 (2008): 35-57. Published in Chinese as “Qiantan Qin-Handai de xingfa

- yishi yu zhuguan zhenshi” 淺談秦漢代的刑法儀式與主關真實, transl. Wu Wenling 鄔文玲, in *Jianbo yanjiu* 簡帛研究 2010, ed. Bu Xianqun 卜憲群 and Yang Zhenhong 楊振紅 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2012), 43-58.
- “Bow Control in Han China: Yuqiu Shouwang on Self-Defense,” *Journal of Asian History* 42.2 (2008): 143-64.
- “Progress and Publicity in Early China: Qin Shihuang, Ritual, and Common Knowledge,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 22.1 (2008): 21-43.
- “Jia Yi on the Law,” *Zinbun: Annals of the Institute for Research in Humanities, Kyoto University* 40 (2007): 53-70.
- “Rituals that Don’t Reach, Punishments that Don’t Impugn: Jia Yi on the Exclusions from Punishment and Ritual,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 125.1 (2005): 31-44.
- “Six of One, Two Dozen of the Other: The Abatement of Mutilating Punishments under Han Emperor Wen,” *Asia Major* (third series) 18.1 (2005): 79-100.

Book reviews (most recent five years)

- Textual Practices of Literary Training in Medieval China*, by Christopher M.B. Nugent. *Tang Studies* 43 (2025): 159-162.
- Narrative Devices in the Shiji: Retelling the Past*, by Lei Yang. *Journal of Asian Studies* 84.3 (2025): 849-851.
- Von Briefen und Kompilatoren: Zur Einbindung von Texten des Genres Shu in Geschichts- und Sammelwerken*, by Clara Luhn, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 143.4 (2023): 974-975.
- Books of Fate and Popular Culture in Early China: The Daybook Manuscripts of the Warring States, Qin, and Han*, ed. Donald Harper and Marc Kalinowski, *T’oung Pao* 109.5-6 (2023): 705-712.
- The Politics of the Past in Early China*, by Vincent S. Leung, *T’oung Pao* 107.3-4 (2021): 487-489.
- Forming the Early Chinese Court: Rituals, Spaces, Roles*, by Luke Habberstad, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 80.1 (2020): 228-231.

Conferences, talks, and presentations (most recent five years)

- “Moments in Manuscript Poetry from the Tang: ‘Twenty Poems about Dunhuang,’” presentation at the Association for Asian Studies annual conference, 13 March 2025.
- “Water Inspiration in the ‘Twenty Poems about Dunhuang,’” Western Branch of the American Oriental Society Annual Meeting, 1 November 2024.
- “The Baader-Meinhof Phenomenon in Early China: Guodian ‘Six Positions’ and Jia Yi’s ‘Method of Sixes,’” Creel Center symposium presentation, University of Chicago, 18 May 2024.
- “The Xuanquanzhi ‘Monthly Ordinances for the Four Seasons’ in Light of Some Other Han Texts,” online presentation at the “International Forum on Paleography and Chinese Civilization,” Tsinghua University, 22 October 2023.
- “Topophilia and the Twenty Poems about Dunhuang: locus and amor loci,” talk at Stanford University, 15 May 2023.

- “*Yueling* During the Han in Light of Xuanquanzhi,” presentation to the Columbia Early China Seminar, Columbia University, 14 April 2023.
- ““Twenty Lyrics about Dunhuang’ on the Page,” presentation at the Association for Asian Studies annual conference, 17 March 2023.
- “Hanging Spring: Manuscript Sources and Received Accounts,” presentation at the Southeast Early China Roundtable annual conference, 12 November 2022.
- “Manuscript Copies of ‘Twenty Lyrics About Dunhuang,’” presentation at the Western Branch of the American Oriental Society Annual Meeting, 5 November 2022.
- “Interactions in the Documentary Record at Xuanquanzhi,” presentation at the Southeast Early China Roundtable annual conference, 19 February 2022.
- “Near the Intersection of Han and Barbarian: Bureaucratic Voices from the Margins,” keynote address to “Missing Sources & Marginal Voices: Reconstructing Asian Historical Narratives,” online conference organized by the Department of History, University of Macau, 7 December 2021.
- “Literate Community in Early Imperial China,” online presentation as part of the Erlangen Sinologicum series, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, 9 December 2020.
- “Frontier Encounters in Excavated Materials from the Han Northwest,” presentation at the online “Chinese Frontiers and Central Eurasia: Art, Archaeology and History at the Turn of the Common Era” conference, Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University, 4 December 2020.
- “The *Lunyu* and Its Neighbors in the Han Northwest,” presentation at the online conference “The *Lunyu* and Its Neighbors,” University of Pennsylvania, 21 November 2020.
- “Han and Qiang Interactions in the Hexi Region as Visible in Texts from Xuanquanzhi,” online presentation as part of the Dunhuang and the Silk Road Seminar Series, University of Cambridge, 5 November 2020.

Professional societies

American Society for Premodern Asia

European Society for the Study of Chinese Manuscripts

Tang Studies Society