

# Brian Lander

brian\_landers@brown.edu

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## EMPLOYMENT

**Brown University**, Associate Professor as of 2024. Assistant Professor 2017-2024  
History Department and the Institute at Brown for Environment and Society (Environmental Studies)  
**Harvard University**, 2015-2017  
Postdoctoral Fellow at the Harvard University Center for the Environment

## EDUCATION

**Columbia University**, New York, Ph.D. in Chinese History, 2015; M.Phil. 2011; M.A. 2010.  
**McGill University**, Montreal, Canada, 2006. M.A. in East Asian Studies.  
**University of Victoria**, Victoria, Canada, 2003. B.A. in History.

## Non-degree programs

**NYU Institute for the Study of the Ancient World**, Research scholar, 2025-26  
**École Pratique des Hautes Études**, Paris, spring 2022  
**Needham Research Institute**, Cambridge, UK, autumn 2022.  
**Shaanxi Normal University**, Xi'an, 2012-2014  
**Wuhan University**, Center for the Study of Bamboo and Silk Manuscripts, 2010-2011  
**Lanzhou University**, 2006-2007  
**East China Normal University**, Shanghai, 2003-2004  
**Radboud University**, Nijmegen, Netherlands, autumn 2001  
**Hong Kong University**, 1999-2000

## WORKS

### Monographs

*The King's Harvest: A Political Ecology of China from the First Farmers to the First Empire*. Yale University Press, 2021. Reviewed in *Environmental History* 28.3, *Agricultural History* 97.1, *Journal of Asian Studies* 82.4, *Journal of Chinese Studies* 77, and *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 82.2. PRC ed. 惟王受年 (2023, trans. 王泽 and 杨姚瑶). Taiwan ed. 王的莊稼 (2024, trans. 蔡耀緯). Received the American Historical Association's Prize for "the best book in any field of history prior to CE 1000."

Brian Lander, Ling Wenchao 凌文超 and Xin Wen 文欣, *State and Local Society in Third Century South China: Administrative Documents Excavated at Zoumalou, Hunan*. Brill, 2024.

### Edited Works

*China's Environmental History: A Reader*. (Co-edited with Peter Lavelle). Forthcoming from Columbia University Press.

Ian M. Miller, Bradley Davis, Brian Lander, John Lee, eds. *The Cultivated Forest: People and Woodlands in Asian History*. University of Washington Press, 2022.

### Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

Katherine Brunson and Brian Lander, "Deer and Humans in the Early Farming Societies of the Yellow River Valley: A Symbiotic Relationship," *Human Ecology* 51.4 (2023), 609-625.

Maxim Korolkov and Brian Lander, "Knowledge Production in China's Early Empires: How Qin and Han

- Officials Gathered Information,” *The Journal of the American Oriental Society* 143.4 (2023), 859-880.
- “Making Use of the Land: The Political Ecology of China’s First Empire,” *The Journal of Chinese History* 7.1 (2023), 1-19. ([Download here](#))
- “From Wetland to Farmland: How Humans Transformed the Central Yangzi Lowlands,” *Asia Major* 35.1 (2022), 1-31. ([Download here](#))
- “Small-Scale Water Control Works in Early Imperial China,” *Water History* 14.2 (2022), 233-246.
- Brian Lander, Mindi Schneider, and Katherine Brunson “A History of Pigs in China: from Curious Omnivores to Industrial Pork.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 79.4 (2020), 865-889. ([Download here](#))
- “Birds and Beasts were Many: The Ecology and Climate of the Guanzhong Basin in the Pre-Imperial Period.” *Early China* 43 (2020), 207-245.
- Brian Lander and Katherine Brunson, “Wild Mammals of Ancient North China,” *The Journal of Chinese History* 2.2 (2018), 291-312 and online supplementary materials. Translated by Bai Qianfan: 中国古代华北地区的野生哺乳动物. 黄河文明与可持续发展, 第6辑 (2020.2), 153-185.
- Brian Lander and Katherine Brunson, “The Sumatran Rhinoceros was Extirpated from Mainland East Asia by Hunting and Habitat Loss,” *Current Biology* (March 19, 2018), R252-R253.
- “State Management of River Dikes in Early China: New Sources on the Environmental History of the Central Yangzi Region.” *T’oung Pao* 100.4-5 (2014): 325-62. Translated by Ling Wenchao 凌文超: 漢代的河堤治理: 長江中游地區環境史的新收穫。簡帛研究 2018: 323-344.

### Peer-Reviewed Chapters

- Xiangli Ding and Brian Lander, “Taming the Waters, Claiming the Land: Mass Labor in the 1954-55 Dongting Dike Campaign,” in Micah Muscolino, ed., *Revolutionary Natures: Grassroots Environmental Histories of China’s Mao Era* (University of Washington Press, 2025).
- “How Humans have Transformed China’s Biosphere,” forthcoming in Coggins and Liu, eds., *The Sage Handbook on China’s Environment* (2026).
- “Deforestation in Early China: How People Adapted to Wood Scarcity,” in *The Cultivated Forest* (2022), 1-19.
- Katherine Brunson, Brian Lander & Mindi Schneider, “Cattle and People in China: From the Neolithic to the Present.” In: E. Wright & C. Ginja (eds.), *Cattle and People: Interdisciplinary Approaches to an Ancient Relationship*. Columbus: Lockwood Press. 2022, 281-302.
- Brian Lander and Thomas Dubois, “A History of Soy in China: From Weedy Bean to Global Commodity,” published in C.M. da Silva & C. de Maio, eds., *The Age of the Soybean: An Environmental History of Soy During the Great Acceleration* (White Horse Press, 2022), 29-47. ([Download here](#))

### Book Reviews and Other Short Works

- “The Retreat of the Forests — the Advance of the Timber Plantations: A Review of Ian M. Miller, *Fir and Empire*,” *China Review International* 26.4 (2021), 242-251.
- Review of Éric Trombert, *Le glaive et la charrue: Soldats et paysans chinois à la conquête de l’ouest*. *Journal of East Asian Science, Technology and Medicine* 55 (2023), 190-194.
- Review of Emily O’Gorman, *Wetlands in a Dry Land: More-than-Human Histories of Australia’s Murray-Darling Basin*, published in *Agricultural History* 98.1 (2024), 139-41.
- “Qin State” and “Qin Dynasty,” in *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History: Asia and Africa*. Wiley (2021).
- “Review of Kowner et al., eds. *Animals and Human Society in Asia: Historical, Cultural and Ethical Perspectives*,” *Asian Perspectives* 60.2 (2021), 444-47.

Mindi Schneider, B. Lander & K. Brunson, "How the Pig Became a Pork Factory in China. *China Dialogue*. [www.chinadialogue.net/culture/11394-How-the-pig-became-a-pork-factory-in-China/en](http://www.chinadialogue.net/culture/11394-How-the-pig-became-a-pork-factory-in-China/en) 2017

"Review of Conrad Totman, *Japan: An Environmental History*," *Environmental History* 22.2, 2017.

"Review of Erica Brindley, *Ancient China and the Yue: Perceptions and Identities on the Southern Frontier, c. 400 BCE-50 CE*." *Early China* 39, 2016, 295-98

"Review of Anne P. Underhill, ed. *A Companion to Chinese Archaeology*," *Early China*, 38, 2015, 233-36

"Review of Yijie Zhuang, 'Geoarchaeological Investigation of Pre-Yangshao Agriculture, Ecological Diversity and Landscape Change in North China' (Ph.D. thesis)," *Dissertation Reviews*, 2012.

### **Translations from Chinese**

Xu Chang, "A Review of the Hot Topics in 20 Years of Collating and Researching the Documents from the Three Kingdoms state of Wu excavated at Zoumalou," *Bamboo and Silk* 5.2 (2022), 313-48.

Xiong Qu and Song Shaohua, "A Study of Sun Wu Seed Grain Loan Registers from Zoumalou" *Bamboo and Silk* 1.1 (2018): 191-222.

Chapters in Li Feng and Liang Zhonghe, eds., *Guicheng: an archaeological study of the formation of states on the Jiaodong Peninsula in late Bronze-Age China, 1000-500 BCE*. 2 vols. Beijing: Kexue, 2018.

Li Feng, "A Study of the Bronze Vessels and Sacrificial Remains of the Early Qin State from Lixian, Gansu," in *Imprints of Kinship: Studies of Recently Discovered Bronze Inscriptions from Ancient China*, by E.L. Shaughnessy (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2017), 209-34.

### **AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS**

Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, NYU. Research scholar fellowship, 2025-26.

Brown University Early Career Research Achievement Award, April 2023

Li Foundation fellow at the Needham Research Institute, Cambridge, UK, fall 2022.

Henry Luce Foundation/ACLS Program in China Studies Early Career Fellowship, 2020-21

Haffenreffer Museum Faculty Fellowship, Brown University, 2018-2019

ACLS/Chiang Ching-kuo Comparative Perspectives on Chinese Culture and Society Program. "The Wood Age in Asia: Comparative Perspectives on Forest History in China" conference. Yale University, September 2018 (co-awardee with three others)

Tang Center for Early China, Columbia University, "Workshop on Zoumalou Administrative Documents," fully funded, April 2017

Henry Luce Foundation/ ACLS Program in China Studies Collaborative Reading-Workshop Grant "Administrative Documents from the Three Kingdoms State of Wu Excavated at Zoumalou, Changsha," Harvard University, September, 2016

Mellon Fellow at Columbia's Interdisciplinary Center for Innovative Theory and Empirics, 2014-15

Columbia University Academic Year Teaching Fellowship, 2014-15

Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Travel Fellowship, 2012-2013

L. Carrington Goodrich Fellowship, Columbia University, 2011-2012

China-Canada Scholar's Exchange Program, Wuhan University, 2010-2011

Creel Paleography workshop in China, July 2009

China-Canada Scholar's Exchange Program, Lanzhou University, 2006-2007

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Master's Scholarship, 2005-2006

McGill Major Fellowship, 2004-2005

University of Victoria East Asian Studies Scholarship in Shanghai, 2003-2004  
Coastal Inquiries Fellowship at Radboud University, the Netherlands, fall 2001

### CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS, INVITED LECTURES & PODCASTS

- “Colonization in Early Imperial China: How the Yangtze Delta became "China," Yale University, Feb. 2026.
- “How China’s Early Empires Conquered and Transformed the Yangtze Delta” ISAW public lecture, Oct 2025.
- “从扬子鳄的视角看长江低地的环境变迁,” delivered at Fudan, Beijing Normal, and Wenzhou Universities, May-June 2025.
- “The Ecological History of the Yangtze River Wetlands” University of British Columbia, March 2024.
- The Domestication of the Yangtze Lowlands” Association for Asian Studies, Seattle, March 2024.
- “The State and the Environmental History of Early China” *Tides of History* Podcast, Jan. 4, 2024.
- “The Political Ecology of the First Chinese Empire” Chuo University, Tokyo, January 2024
- “The Effects of Early Chinese Ideas on Early Chinese Environments” Northeast Conference on Chinese Thought, Brown University, Nov. 2023
- “The Environmental History of the Early Yangtze River Delta” Keynote talk of Southeastern Early China Roundtable, Charleston, Oct. 2023, followed by a separate public lecture.
- “长江中游秦汉魏晋的水利痕迹” Wuhan University, July 6, 2023.
- “长江中游环境史” Huazhong Agricultural University, Wuhan, July 7, 2023.
- “生态学视角下的秦朝历史” Dalian Normal University, July 21, 2023.
- “The Historical Ecology of the Yangzi Delta Region: On the Economy of the Wu and Yue Kingdoms” Conference of East Asian Environmental History, Daejeon, Korea, June, 2023.
- “The Anthropogenic Transformation of the Yangtze River Lowlands: From Biodiverse Wetlands to Rice Fields and Carp Ponds.” “Asia and the Anthropocene” symposium, Rutgers, May 2023.
- “A preliminary inquiry into the climate of Early Imperial China, c. 250 BCE-300 CE” presented at the American Society for Environmental History annual conference, Boston, March 2023.
- “Ecologies of Pre-Modern Empires” roundtable, Association for Asian Studies, Boston, 2023.
- “The King’s Harvest” interview on *New Books Network* podcast, Feb. 15, 2023.
- “Histories of the Yangzi River Wetlands” Leipzig University, Nov. 2022
- “Environmental Histories of the Yangzi River Wetlands” Durham University, Nov. 2022.
- “The Ecology of China’s First Empire” University of Edinburgh, Nov. 2022.
- “Environmental Histories of the Yangzi River Wetlands” Cambridge China Research Seminar, Oct. 2022.
- “Sixth Century Advice on Raising Chickens: Text-reading Seminar on the *Qimin yaoshu*” Needham Research Institute Seminar, Cambridge UK, Oct. 2022.
- “The Historical Ecology of the Yangzi Delta Region” workshop at Oxford University, Oct., 2020.
- “Du Fleuve Jaune au Fleuve Bleu: Histoire environnementale de la Chine ancienne.” Sorbonne and CRCAO, September 2022.
- “The Human Colonization of the Central Yangzi Wetlands from the Han to the Tang,” European Association for Chinese Studies conference, Olomouc, Czechia, August 2022.
- “A History of Soy in China: From Weedy Bean to Global Commodity” presented online at *Soy in the Anthropocene* symposium at the University of Vienna, November 2021.
- “The Ecology of Early China’s Political Systems” Presented online at the University of Michigan, Oct. 2021, as well as at Harvard’s Fairbank Center for China Studies in Feb. 2022. The latter is online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCe6HtIviAo>
- “Deer and Humans in Early North China.” Presented online at the sixth conference of East Asian

- Environmental History, hosted by Kyoto University, September 2021.
- “Water Control in Early China” presented online, Kyungpook National University, Korea, April, 2021.
- Political Ecology of the Qin Empire” presented at the online annual conference of the Society for the Study of Early China Conference, August 2020.
- The Production of Geographical Knowledge in the Qin Empire” presented at the online Locality and Geographical Writing” workshop of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science. July, 2020.
- The Political Ecology of China’s First Empire” UCLA Center for China Studies. January, 2020.
- “Building Dikes to Grow Rice: How Humans Colonized the Central Yangzi Wetlands” 3rd World Conference of Environmental History, Florianópolis, Brazil, July 2019.
- “Deer and People in Ancient China.” American Society for Environmental History conference, Columbus, April 2019.
- “Dike Building and Environmental Change in the Jiangnan Plain, 200 BCE to 1297 CE.” Association for Asian Studies, Denver, March 2019.
- “Humans and Deer in Neolithic North China” at the “Environments and Adaptation in Ancient China” symposium, The University of Michigan, February 2019.
- “Politics and Environment in China’s First Empire.” Columbia University Early China Seminar. New York, January 2019.
- “Reconstructing the Flood History of the Central Yangzi Basin,” American Association of Geographers annual meeting, New Orleans, 2018.
- “The Human Colonization of the Central Yangzi Wetlands.” Association of Asian Studies, Washington DC, 2018.
- “Forestry in Qin.” Association of Asian Studies annual conference, Toronto, 2017.
- “Humans and Wetlands in Ancient Central China,” Boston University, 2017.
- “Forestry in Early China” at “Resourceful Things: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Resource Exploration and Exploitation in pre-modern and modern China,” Harvard University, 2016.
- “Rethinking the Environmental History of the Central Yangzi Wetlands” at the “Water Resources pre-conference” before “Resourceful Things,” Harvard University, 2016.
- “Warfare, Resource Mobilization and State Formation in Qin, 481-208 BCE.” American Society for Environmental History Conference, Seattle, 2016.
- “The *Book of Odes* and Zhou Environmental History” the Society for the Study of Early China Conference, Seattle, 2016.
- “A Political Ecology of the Qin Empire,” Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 2015
- “Using Excavated Texts to Study Early Imperial Environmental History” Harvard East Asian Archaeology Seminar, Cambridge, 2015
- “The Environmental Consequences of the Zheng Guo Canal,” Society for the Study of Early China Conference, Chicago, 2015
- “Rethinking the Environmental History of the Central Yangzi Region,” Asian and African Studies Symposium, Columbia University, 2014
- “Functional-Processual Thought in Western Archaeological Theory,” History Department, Shaanxi Normal University, Xi’an (in Chinese), 2013
- “The Environment of the Guanzhong Basin from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age,” Center for the Historical Geography of the Northwest, Shaanxi Normal University, Xi’an (in Chinese), 2013
- “Han Dynasty Texts on the Surveying of River Dikes,” presented at the Columbia University East Asian Studies Graduate Student Conference, 2012. Co-organizer of conference

“The Theoretical Origins of Western Environmental Archaeology,” Junior Faculty Seminars series, History Department, Wuhan University (in Chinese), 2010

“Han Dynasty Manuscripts in the Collection of Hong Kong Chinese University” presented at the Creel Paleography seminar at the University of Chicago, 2010

“The Uses of Environmental History in Dutch Park Management,” 2004 Qualicum Graduate History Conference.

“New Nature in the Netherlands,” presented at the Second Coastal Inquiries Conference, University College, Ireland, 2003

### **FIELDWORK AND TRAINING**

GIS workshop, Harvard University, May-June, 2017

Central China Agricultural University botany field school at Lu Shan, Jiangxi, April 2011

Japanese program, Fukuoka, Japan, June-July 2010

Studied archaeobotany with Gary Crawford at the University of Toronto, August 2010

Creel Paleography workshop in China, July 2009

Archaeological fieldwork at Guicheng, Shandong, China, Summers of 2008 and 2009

Excavation with the Shaanxi Institute of Archaeology, Chang’an County, Shaanxi, China, June 2007

### **COURSES TAUGHT**

Animals and Plants in Chinese History (ENVS 1916)

Colonization and Ethnicity in East Asian History (HIST 1961N)

East Asian Environmental History (HIST 1820B)

Ecological Imperialism (ENVS 0720/HIST 19761)

From Fire Wielders to Empire Builders:

Human Impact on the Global Environment before 1492 (HIST 0270A)

Global Histories of Wetlands (ENVS 1915)

River Histories: Fishes, Floods and the Transformation of Freshwater Ecosystems (HIST 1974D)

Readings in East Asian History (HIST 2970M)

### **ADVISING**

Concentration advisor in Environmental Studies since 2017 and History since 2020

First and second year advisor for the College 2019-2021, 2023

Supervisor of PhD student Daisy Yuk Ping Wan

### **SERVICE**

Co-Organizer of the Environmental Humanities at Brown Initiative

Member of Brown’s Faculty Executive Committee 2022-2023

Participant in Brown’s faculty-led classical Chinese reading group 2017-present

J.M. Stuart Fellowship Committee at the John Carter Brown Library, 2018

Manuscript reviewer for *Cambridge Elements*, *Current Anthropology*, *Early China*, *Environment and History*, *Environmental History*, *Études chinoises*, *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, *Monumenta Serica*, *Nature*, *Science Advances*, *The American Journal of Human Biology*, *The Holocene*, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, *The Journal of Historical Geography*, *The Journal of World History*, *The Journal of Chinese History*, and *T’oung Pao*.

**MEMBERSHIPS**

Society for the Study of Early China, American Society for Environmental History, Association for Asian Studies, Association for East Asian Environmental History

**WORK EXPERIENCE**

History interpreter (gold mining & gold rush history), Klondike National Historic Sites, Dawson City, Yukon, Canada, summers of 1999, 2001 and 2002; Natural history interpreter, Kluane National Park, Canada, summers of 2003, 2005

**LANGUAGES**

Mandarin: speak and read

Classical Chinese: advanced reading

Japanese: basic reading

French: fluent