

## Trinity Centre for Biblical Studies

Post-graduates in Focus Series

An interview with **Hairuo Wang** who began the Ph.D. programme in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

Hairuo, we really appreciate your participation in this series.

Would you mind telling us about your background and the path you took to a Ph.D. in Biblical Studies?

Happy to! I was born and raised in Beijing, then moved to Tokyo for higher education. I earned a Bachelor's degree in Political Economy (!) from Waseda University, Tokyo, driven by my parents' career aspirations for me. A pivotal exchange year at the Divinity School of Edinburgh sparked my interest in Biblical Studies through my very first courses in Koine Greek and New Testament Exegesis. This newfound passion led me to pursue a Master's at Yale Divinity School, where I explored both the breadth and the depth of this field. More importantly, I've come to realize that amidst the vast array of methods and texts, my interests are deeply shaped by who I am and where I stand in relation to the ancient texts. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I completed a second Master's in New Testament Studies at the University of Edinburgh, where I further developed my skills in ancient languages and research methodologies. These experiences have fuelled my passion and equipped me with the expertise to pursue a Ph.D. in Biblical Studies at TCD.

Why did you choose to come to TCD for your Ph.D.?

What sets Trinity apart is its vibrant and diverse intellectual community. Within the Trinity Center of Biblical Studies, research spans a wide range of domains. Recognizing that ancient texts are intricately interwoven within broader cultural and intellectual landscapes, I am eager to engage in interdisciplinary dialogues with researchers specializing in different field. I am also honored to study with my supervisor Professor Danielle Pevarello, whose prior investigations into the reception of the New Testament offer invaluable insights that could shed light on my exploration of Pseudo-Clementine literature as a reception of the synoptic Gospels. Furthermore, his mastery of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Syriac, coupled with his pedagogical experience at Trinity College Dublin and the University of Cambridge, positions him as an ideal mentor for guiding me through the rigorous examination of ancient texts.

Would you mind sharing a little about the topic of your Ph.D. thesis?

My thesis explores a minor female character in the New Testament, first introduced as the Syrophenician woman in Mark's Gospel, where Jesus initially rejects her plea for her demon-tormented daughter. Her narrative evolves in Matthew's Gospel as the Canaanite woman and in Pseudo-Clementine literature as Justa, a Greek woman of high social status who converted to Judaism. Despite being cast out by her unbelieving husband, Justa maintained her faith, raised her daughter, and adopted two sons who

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<sup>1</sup> This is the twelfth in a series of interviews with Ph.D. students, and recent graduates, who are members of the Trinity Centre for Biblical Studies.

later assisted the apostle Peter. This research examines her portrayals in the canonical Gospels and the third-century Pseudo-Clementine writings using an intersectionality framework. It aims to understand how her identities—gender, motherhood, socio-cultural background—intersect to shape her experience in different historical milieu.

What are some of the highlights of your time at TCD?

There are so many moments that I cherish. A recent one was organizing a graduate symposium with three fellow Ph.D. students. We began from scratch, brainstorming topics, securing funding, and developing a budget. Despite the challenges, the collaboration and support from my peers made it a fulfilling endeavour. Another memorable moment was while reading a Syriac manuscript of Pseudo-Clementine (411 CE). I encountered a perplexing Syriac word that didn't match any dictionary entries. During the supervision meeting, Professor Pevarello and I simultaneously pointed out the same word, both puzzled. This shared moment of confusion over a scribe's work from over sixteen centuries ago was profoundly moving. For me, it's these instances that encapsulate the essence of studying historical texts, reminding me why I'm passionate about this field.

Do you have any advice for prospective Ph.D. students?

Devoting four years to a Ph.D. program is a significant commitment. When I was applying, I worried about various factors: the vexation while writing the thesis, self-doubt when applying for funding and publications, and the nagging 'what-ifs' while studying alone, and the challenges of living overseas away from my family. To be honest, I haven't been able to avoid any of these. However, I have come to realize that with the support and guidance from my peers and teachers here, these issues are manageable, and I am growing stronger through them. Hence, my piece of advice will be: be brave.

Thank you, Hairuo, we really appreciate you taking the time to respond to our questions.