

RUORAN CHENG

Department of Economic History, London School of Economics,
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EDUCATION

- London School of Economics, London, UK** *2020-present*
PhD candidate in Economic History
Thesis Title: *Transportation network and spatial distribution of economic activities in the past 10000 years China*
Supervisors: Prof. Joan Roses
- University of Hong Kong, HK** *2022-2023*
Visiting scholar, hosted by Prof. Zhiwu Chen
- Northeastern University, Boston, MA, USA** *2018-2020*
MS in Civil Engineering
- Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA** *2013-2017*
BS in GIS and Spatial Analysis *with Research Distinction in Geography*
Advisor: Prof. Daniel Z. Sui

RESEARCH INTEREST

Economic History, Economic Geography, Historical Transportation, Origin and Development of Civilization

JOB MARKET PAPER

- **Route To Cities: Natural Endowments Under Varying Institutions**

Abstract: According to economic geography literature, the location and size of cities are influenced by natural endowments and human endowments. This study examines the role of natural endowments and their interaction with human endowments in the pre-industrial era. By examining the location of cities in China over the past two millennia and linking natural endowments to historical transportation networks, my analysis reveals that natural endowments on routes generally had a positive and statistically significant influence on urban location. However, the magnitude of this effect was not constant over time but fluctuated across different dynastic cycles. This suggests that the value attributed to natural features shifted in response to changing institutional contexts. Mechanism tests indicate that governance strategies and taxation structures were key institutional factors influencing the varying impact of natural endowments. Specifically, dynasties that relied primarily on indirect taxes, as opposed to direct taxes, saw a significantly higher marginal effect of natural endowments to waterways—representing domestic market forces—on city locations. In dynasties where the national capital was closer to the population centroid, natural endowments to land routes—representing central government control— had a higher marginal effect compared to other eras. Additionally, the arrival of Arab and European traders spurred the development of the maritime Silk Road and international trade, leading to a long-term, stable shift of cities towards coastal port areas.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

- **Transportation Cost in the Great Divergence: Yangtze China VS. England**
- **Path Toward Civilization: Natural Roads and the Location of Economic Activities in Pre-historical China (7000 BP – 2000 BP)**
- **A Starry Sky: The Origins of Cities in Neolithic China**

TEACHING

LSE

- EC204: Financial Markets and the Global Economy: The History of Bubbles, Crashes and Inflation (TA, Evaluation 4.5/5)

AWARDS

- 2016 Research Scholar Award, The Ohio State University
- 2016-2017 Arthur H. Robinson Scholarship Outstanding Undergraduate GIScience Major, Department of Geography, The Ohio State University
- 2020 College of Engineering Master of Science Leadership Award, Northeastern University

PRESENTATIONS

2024

- North American Meeting of the Urban Economics Association, Washington DC
- Economic History Association Annual Meeting, Sacramento, poster session
- European Meeting of the Urban Economics Association, Copenhagen
- Graduate Economic History Seminar, LSE
- Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University
- Economic History Society Annual Conference, Newcastle, poster presentation

2016

- The American Association of Geographers 2016 Annual Meeting, Boston

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Analytical skills

GIS, Remote Sensing, Social Network Analysis, Stata

Programming Language

Python, Java Script, SQL

LANGUAGE

Chinese (native), English (fluent)

REFERENCE

Prof. Joan Roses

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Prof. Kent Deng

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