



EARLY CHINA SEMINAR LECTURE SERIES

Sponsored by
The Tang Center for Early China, Columbia University;
Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, Columbia University;
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Idlers on the Southwest Frontier: Native Continuities or Evasions of Han Imperial Time

Alice Yao, University of Chicago

Time and Location:

4:30-6:30pm
March 11th, 2016 (Friday)

Seminar Room 2, Second Floor
Faculty House
Columbia University
64 Morningside Drive
New York, NY 10027



Abstract:

In this study of Han imperial conquest of southwest China, I argue that time is a technique of political control in precapitalist empires and a source of power asymmetry that local subjects understood and actively sought to curtail. From the expansion of political economy to the invention of universal histories, imperial policies incorporate heterogeneous geographies and subjects into unified temporal frames, thus supplanting differences in social experience. Drawing from subaltern and colonial anthropologies, I argue that resistance of state time is neither restricted to modern colonialism nor realized only in moments of organized rebellions. Using archaeological and historical data from the southwest frontier of Han China and former territories of Bronze Age polities, I examine how local settlements and cemetery activities are incorporated into a generalized time of the state. A comparison of rates of change across public and private domains of social reproduction demonstrates asynchronies that highlight how the temporality of life and death unsettles ideas of productivity and techniques of time regulation. The implications of this study indicate that what is at stake in resistance movements (e.g., revitalization and indigenization) is as much about claiming the past as it is about reckoning the forces that integrate public and private time.

Seminar Co-Chairs:

Jue Guo
Barnard College, Columbia University
Roderick Campbell
Institute for the Study of Ancient World, New York University