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Recent Events

The 2nd Tang Special Annual Lecture in Archeology

The magnificent tomb of Liu He, the Marquis of Haihun, in modern Jianxi Province, was selected as one of China's top 10 archaeological discoveries in 2015. The plentiful and various kinds of grave goods yielded from the tomb have attracted the attention of both the public and the academia since then. On April 1st, 2017, two leading excavators of the Haihunhou excavation, Prof. Yang Jun of Jiangxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology and Prof. Zhang Zhongli of Shaanxi Academy of Archaeology, presented their works at Kent 403, Columbia University in the event "Tang Special Annual lecture in Archeology, 2016-2017: The Excavation of the Haihunhou Tomb". Prof. Anthony Barbieri-Low, University of California, Santa Barbara, Prof. Sarah Allan, Dartmouth College, and Prof. Li Feng, Columbia University offered commentaries of the discovery.

The excavation of the tomb as part of the settlement complex of the Marquisate of Haihun of the Western Han Dynasty (206-9 BC?) started in 2011. The field work ended at 2016 and the following laboratory work and conservation are still in progress. The tomb, locating at the center of the cemetery, along with 8 affiliated tombs, is comprises multiple wooden compartments, consistent with contemporary Han practice. The tomb yielded numerous objects, including gold ingots, jades, bronzes, lacquer wares, and various written bamboo slips and wooden tablets.

Prof. Yang introduced the biography of the tomb occupant—Liu He (92-59 BCE), the Marquis of Haihun of the Western Han, the process of excavation, and the stunning objects unearthed from the tomb. Prof. Zhang presented a study regarding the Han funeral practices by introducing the plan and the structure of the cemetery and the affiliated tombs. The two lectures were translated by Shih-han Wang and Dongming Wu, PhD students of EALAC.

After the two keynote lectures, the commentators offered discussions with regard to the items from the tomb. Prof. Barbieri-Low discussed the lacquer wares and their possible origin in the Han workshop system. Prof. Li focused on the two ancient bronze vessels and pointed out the phenomenon of antiquarianism among the Han royal members. Prof. Allen reviewed the written texts discovered in the tomb and suggested that the multilateral intellectual identity of Liu He should be also considered when analyzing the written materials.

In the Q & A section, attendees raised several interesting questions, such as the reason of burying medical texts in tombs and the relation between poisoning and the melon seeds discovered in the deceased's abdomen. The lively discussion highlights the great enthusiasm among the scholars and public audience as well, and many important questions it offers for further research in the future.

The Tang Special Annual Lecture in Archaeology not only brought the latest discovery in China to the US, but also established an arena for scholars to exchange ideas and thoughts. With the information, experiences, and inspiration the Tang Special Lecture continues to bring in, the research and the understanding of early China will have a huge leap in the future, in which the Tang Center for Early China and the East Asian Languages and Cultures of Columbia University will play a critical role.

The Center's co-founders, Mr. Oscar Tang and Dr. Agnes Hsu-Tang, attended the event and took part in the discussion in the Q & A section.



Oscar Tang and Agnes Hsu-Tang



From left: Li Feng, Zhang Zhongli, Yang Jun, Sarah Allan, Anthony Barbieri-Low

Exhibition Symposium “Secrets of the Sea: A Tang Shipwreck and Early Trade in China”

In conjunction with Asia Society Museum's highly anticipated exhibition of 76 artifacts from a more than one-thousand-year-old shipwreck on view for the first time in the United States, this symposium brought together leading experts and original members of the consulting team on the shipwreck to present a comprehensive study of the cargo, its historical and cultural contexts, and issues of maritime trade in the ninth century.

On Saturday, April 22, 2017, the symposium took place at the World Room, Pulitzer Hall of Columbia University. It consisted of two panels: morning panel “The Belitung Shipwreck in its Historical Context” and afternoon panel “The Belitung Cargo”. Each panel included three presentations and a Q&A session. Participating scholars were Dr. Bryan Averbuch, CUNY; Dr. Dora Ching, P.Y. and Kinmay W. Tang Center for East Asian Art at Princeton University; Dr. John Guy, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Prof. Derek Heng, Northern Arizona University and the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Center, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (Singapore); Prof. François Louis, Bard Graduate Center; Prof. Victor Mair, University of Pennsylvania; Dr. Adriana Proser, Asia Society Museum, New York; and Dr. Liu Yang, The Minneapolis Institute of Art.

Dr. Agnes Hsu-Tang, co-founder of the Tang Center for Early China, opened the Saturday symposium with her welcome remarks and brief introduction to the Belitung project. Mr. Oscar Tang also attended the event.

The keynote presentation was delivered at Asia Society on Friday, April 21, 2017, by Regina Krahl, independent scholar, on “Precious Metals, Precious Earths: Luxury Goods in Ninth-Century China”

Workshop on the Zoumalou Manuscripts

On April 27-29, 2017, a special workshop was held in 403 Kent Hall, Columbia University, to discuss the administrative documents from the Three Kingdoms state of Sun Wu that were excavated at Zoumalou, Changsha, in 1996. Sponsored by the Tang Center, the goal of the workshop was to bring together leading scholars of these documents to discuss what they can teach us about the agricultural and political economies in the Sun Wu state of the 230s and 240s. The four main presenters were Abe Yoshinobu of Chuo University in Tokyo (Agriculture), Shen Gang of Jilin University in Changchun (Taxation), Wei Bin of Wuhan University (the Household Registration system), and Ling Wenchao of the Institute of History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing (Labor service). The workshop was organized by Brian Lander with the help of Weng Haiying. Other participants were Li Feng, Guo Jue, Maxim Korolkov and Wu Dongming of Columbia University, Robin Yates of McGill University, Wu Liangbao, Sakikawa Takashi and Liu Zhao of Jilin University, Zhu Xiaoxue of Huaqiao University and Xin Wen of Harvard University.

Each session of the workshop began with a presentation of about 20 minutes by one professor and was followed by a free discussion of the various issues raised in the talk, as well as the translation of key documents. This workshop achieved several goals. The first was for the four presenters to inform the other participants about the state of the field in Zoumalou studies.



From left: Bryan Averbuch, Derek Heng, John Guy, and Dora Ching



From left: Adriana Proser, François Louis, Liu Yang, and Victor Mair

Most importantly, participants had long and substantive discussions about central issues in the economic and political history of Early China. This does not happen during conferences in China, which are focused on short presentations of original research. Finally, this workshop contributed to the ongoing writing of an article by three of the participants (Ling, Lander and Wen) which will introduce the Zoumalou materials to the English-speaking world.



From left: Brian Lander, Maxim Korolkov, Ling Wenchao, Liu Zhao, Wu Liangbao, Li Feng, Zhu Xiaoxue, Shen Gang

Tang Special Lecture

In the afternoon of April 3, 2017, Prof. Wang Weilin, Deputy Director of the Shaanxi Museum of History presented a lecture in Chinese on “The Painted Pottery of the Miaodigou Culture and the Rise of Civilization in China: The Excavation at Yangganzhai and Its Significance”

The Guanzhong area of the Shaanxi Province in the We River Valley was an important birth place of ancient civilizations in China. Around 4000 BC, the Miaodigou culture expanded its influence from the Guanzhong area to the Ordos region in the north, the Gansu-Qinghai region in the west, the Yangtze River region in the south, and the sea coastal region in the east. Painted pottery was the hallmark of the Miaodigou culture, and its unique flower-pattern pottery offered an important bond among the people who resided in this vast region. This symbolizes the first major cultural integration in Chinese history, and provided the foundation for the “China” before China. The talk introduces the recent archaeological excavation of the gigantic Miaodigou cultural site at Yangganzhai in Gaoling near Xi’an, and discusses its significance for understanding the social development as well as expansion of the Miaodigou culture.

Mike Hearn, the Douglas Dillon Chairman of the Department of Asian Art of The Met attended the special lecture and participated in the Q&A session.

The Early China Seminar Lecture Series

In the Spring 2017 semester, Early China Seminar Lecture Series at Columbia University held five meetings. The diverse topics attracted not only the regular Early China specialists and enthusiasts including faculty, graduate students, and general Tang Center members in the larger New York area, but also archaeologists and historians outside of China.



Wang Weilin, Shaanxi Museum of History

01/27/2017

The first meeting of the Early China Seminar Lecture Series in the new semester began with Professor Sakikawa Takashi on January 27th. Professor Sakikawa is an associate professor of the Institute of Chinese Classics and Paleography, Jilin University in China, and he was the Tang Center for Early China visiting scholar in this semester. His recent research interests include the origin and development of Chinese characters, literacy in early China, engravers and the engraving process of oracle bone inscriptions, and he presented his recent research under the title of “The Emergence and Development of Mechanical Duplication Technique in the Casting of Ancient Chinese Bronze Inscriptions.”

In his talk, Professor Sakikawa examined the mechanical duplication technology in casting bronze inscriptions. He pointed out that in the casting process of Shang and Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, even though there was a considerable need to produce a set of vessels bearing the same inscription, there was actually no use of any mechanical duplication technique such as mold stamping, the inscriptions for each vessel was copied one by one, independently. Professor Sakikawa convincingly demonstrated that by the Eastern Zhou period, this situation changes dramatically. The methods of mechanical duplication such as “single character stamping”, “compound character stamping” and “compete inscriptions stamping” gradually emerged and developed among the casting and duplication techniques of the bronze inscriptions. In his talk, Professor Sakikawa examined the details of the inscriptions on several representative

samples of casted bronze inscriptions and discussed when and how the mechanical duplication techniques were applied to the casting process of bronze inscriptions.

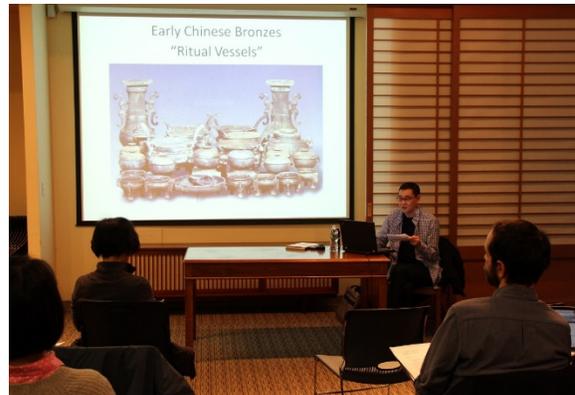
02/17/2017

On February 17th, Early China Seminar welcomed Allison Miller, the assistant professor of Asian art history at Southwestern University. As both an art historian and archaeologist, she gave an interesting talk under the title of “Beyond the Five Colors: Reconsidering Purple and its Sources in Ancient China,” and presented her recent research on the meaning of the color of purple and the technology in dyeing the color.

In her talk, Professor Miller demonstrated that despite widespread beliefs to the contrary, purple was a high prestige color from the Eastern Zhou to the Han and beyond. Its use in imperial insignia denoting high rank and eventual elevation to a position above the five colors signifies that purple played a similar role in ancient China as it did in other ancient societies. Purple’s high status in ancient China would lead the Daoists to adopt the color to signify the pole star and the residence of Taiyi, their highest deity. By employing textual and archaeological evidence, she discussed the sources of purple dye in ancient China, presenting new evidence that the Chinese may have used dyes extracted from shellfish (often loosely referred to as “murex purple”) rather than zicao (gromwell) as has been previously assumed. Professor Miller also argued that purple textiles had a longstanding relationship with Shandong province, particularly the ancient city of Linzi, Shandong province.



Allison Miller, Southwestern University



Takashi Sakikawa, Jilin University

03/31/2017

On March 31st, Li Wai-ye, Professor of Chinese Literature, Harvard University, came to the Early China Seminar and presented her study on Zuo zhuan or the Commentary of Zuo under the title of “Who is the Barbarian in Zuozhuan?” Having participated in a new translation project of Zuo zhuan, Professor Li shared her thoughts about the idea of barbarian in the discourse of Zuo zhuan.

With a close reading of the text, Professor Li argued that there is no fixed categorical term for barbarians or cultural others in Chinese, though names for specific groups can also stand in as a general designation for the non-Sinitic. And although it has often been said that the difference between “Chinese” and “barbarians” is cultural rather than ethnic, the notion of cultural transformation cannot contain the sense of malleable boundaries between “us” and “them” in Zuo zhuan. In her talk, Professor Li discussed the cultural identity and cultural difference in Zuo zhuan from three perspectives: the need for differentiation when differences seem tenuous and arbitrary, the function of historical retrospection in establishing claims of cultural identity or difference, and the rhetorical contexts of moralizing cultural difference. She also compared Zuozhuan with other Warring States texts on the question of barbarians.

04/14/2017

Professor Tamara Chin, the associate professor of Comparative Literature at Brown University gave a talk on the Early China Seminar on April 14th. In a roundtable talk, Professor Chin presented her recent study of the economic history in the Han dynasty under the title of “Gender and Economic Productivity in Han China.”

Professor Chin pointed out that “women’s work” in early China has generally been approached in two related ways: first, women’s work is a moral concept in classical texts that tacitly acknowledged women’s contribution to economic production (men plow, women weave), but that primarily--unlike the unmarked work of men--represented her work in noneconomic terms of wifely household duty. Second, scholars have placed women’s work center stage in reconstructing the empirical economic history of textile production. And the Former Han dynasty plays an important role in both accounts for yielding evidence of a sharp increase both in classicist moral strictures and in actual textile production. In this talk, she discussed the representations of women’s work, work ethic, and consumptive habits in received and excavated Han texts, pointed to the debate over the expansion of market commerce, and suggested that concerns over women’s productivity were not paralleled in discussions of men’s work.



Li Wai-yee, Harvard University



Donald Harper, University of Chicago

05/05/2017

The last meeting of the Early China Seminar Lecture Series in Spring 2017 had Professor Donald Harper, Centennial Professor of Chinese Studies at the University of Chicago. Having long been interested in Chinese medical texts, he presented his study of the recently excavated medical texts from Chengdu, China under the title of “Early Chinese Medical Literature before the Huangdi Classic: New Manuscripts from Laoguanshan Tomb 3, Sichuan.”

By comparing the three groups of second century BCE archaeologically excavated medical manuscripts (the Laoguanshan tomb 3 manuscripts, Mawangdui tomb 3 manuscripts, and Zhangjiashan tomb 247 manuscripts), Professor Harper argued that the amount of manuscript material is sufficient to document the history of Chinese medicine before the Huangdi Classic. In this endeavor, he pointed out that the manuscript culture studies as practiced mainly by European and North American scholars of medieval Europe – including codicology, material philology (the so-called new philology), and the study of technical literature – provide useful theoretical and methodological tools. In his talk, Professor Harper reviewed the issues and concerns that he brought to the study of the expanded corpus of early Chinese medical manuscripts with a focus on his study of the Laoguanshan manuscripts.

Announcements

Celebrating the establishment of the P.Y. and Kinmay W. Tang Center for Silk Road Studies!

The P.Y. and Kinmay W. Tang Center for Silk Road Studies (TCSRS) was established in April 2017 under the auspices of the Institute of East Asian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, to advance research and teaching on the historical overland and maritime exchange networks commonly referred to as the Silk Roads.

Supported by a generous gift by two branches of the Tang family, Oscar Tang and his wife Agnes Hsu-Tang, who are based in New York City, and Bay Area Berkeley alumnae Nadine Tang and Leslie Tang Schilling, with their brother Martin Tang in Hong Kong.

Forthcoming: the 3rd Tang Special Annual Lecture in Archaeology presents the discovery of Shimao.

The 2017-2018 Tang Special Annual lecture in Archaeology, dedicated to the Shimao site, the largest Neolithic stone walled settlement in China will be held at Kent 403, Columbia University from 1:00 – 6:00 pm on September 22, 2017.

The discovery of the Shimao site in northern Shaanxi, the largest Neolithic stone walled settlement in China (>400 ha; ca. 2300-1800 cal. BCE), revealed a unique trajectory to urbanism in China. This once powerful kingdom centered around Shimao was completely unknown in ancient textual records. The discovery challenges previous understandings of sociopolitical changes in early complex society over a broader region on the eve of the Chinese dynastic civilization.

The keynote speaker of the event is the leading archaeologist of the Shimao project, Professor Sun Zhouyong of Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology. A panel discussion by Early China scholars from China and the U.S. featuring Chen Xingcan of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Liu Li of Stanford University, Nicola Di Cosmo of Institute for Advanced Study and Brian Lander of Brown University, is to follow afterwards.

Call for Applications

Tang Center's programs of the 2018- 2019 academic year are open for submission.

The Tang Visiting Scholar's Fellowship

The Tang Visiting Scholar's Fellowship is offered each year to one scholar for an in-residence research period of 10 months at Columbia University, or to two scholars for a period of 5 months each, depending on the need of the proposed projects. The applicant must be non-US based.

Click [here](#) for more information.

The Tang Post-Doctoral Research Award in Early China Studies

The Tang Center offers one Post-Doctoral Research Award in the amount of \$15,000 each year in recognition of outstanding research projects in early Chinese civilization or in archeology.

Click [here](#) for more information.

Workshop and Conference Grants

The Tang Center offers grants in the amount of \$13,000 each to up to two workshop and/or conference proposals each academic year, depending on the scale. Each workshop or conference should have an identified central problem or theme on which the papers will focus. Alternatively, the workshop/conference can be centered on a newly discovered corpus of materials or manuscripts, or on an important archaeological site, or a region.

Click [here](#) for more information.

Call for Manuscripts

Tang Center Series in Early China

Sponsored by the Tang Center for Early China and to be published by Columbia University Press, the “Tang Center Series in Early China” includes new studies that make major contributions to our understanding of early Chinese civilization or that which break new theoretical or methodological grounds in Early China studies. The series is especially interested in publishing works that analyze newly discovered paleographic and manuscript materials as well as archaeological data. Disciplinary focuses of the series are history, archaeology, art history, anthropology, literature, philosophy, and the history of sciences and technology. The series spans from the Neolithic period to the end of the Han Dynasty (AD 220), or to the end of the Tang Dynasty (AD 907) for titles in archaeology. All submissions are subject to peer reviews and editorial evaluation.

Click [here](#) for more information.