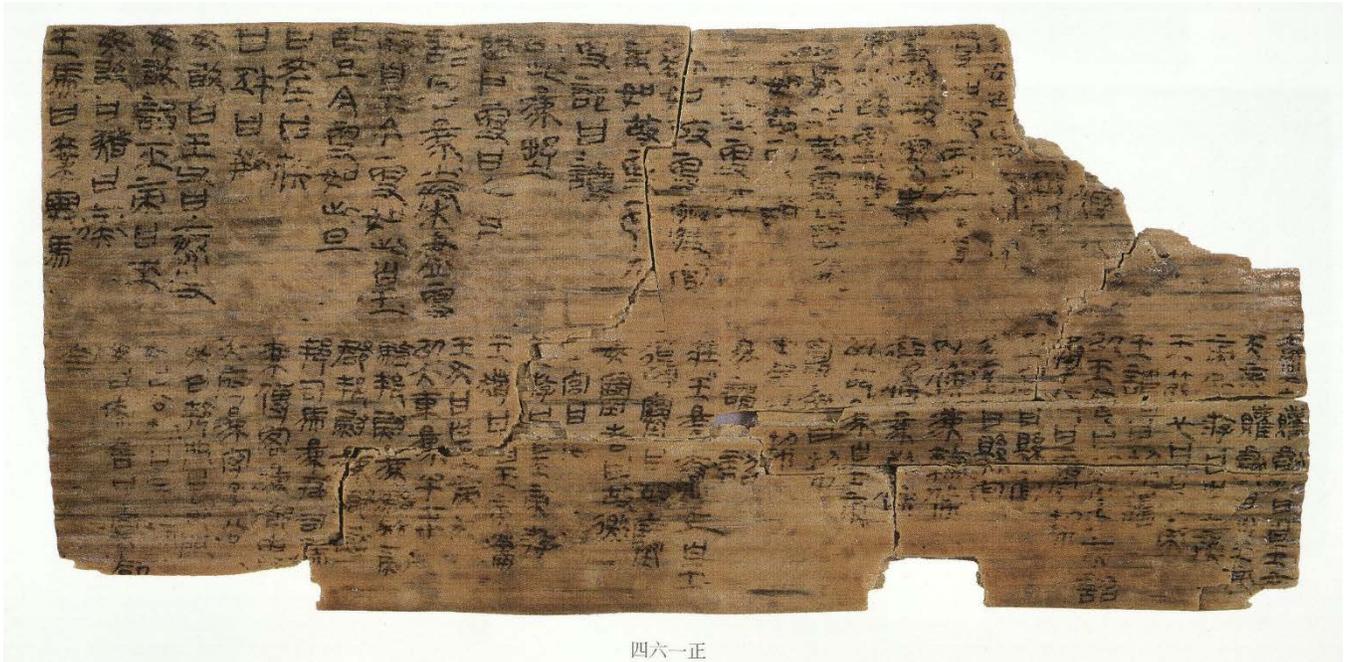




Rewriting Early Chinese Technical Literature for the Age of Empire

Ethan Harkness · New York University



This paper presents an in-depth study of a constellation of inter-related texts transmitted in three *rishu* 日書 (“daybook”) manuscripts dating from the 3rd-1st centuries BCE. All of the manuscripts have an archaeologically verified provenance in the central Yangtze river valley region of the former Warring States kingdom of Chu, and taken together they reveal in unusual detail the effects, both intentional and possibly unintentional, of Qin assimilation policies after the transfer of authority beginning with the conquest of the Chu capital in 278 BCE. These effects are shown to reverberate for millennia in China’s rich tradition of hemerology and related technical arts, and by doing so, they weave a surprising human tapestry connecting nameless diviners, minor officials of the early empire, the First August Thearch of Qin, Mongols, Manchus, and others. Methodologically, it is suggested that despite the idiosyncratic nature of these manuscripts, productive analysis of structural elements remains possible and worthwhile.

February 22, 2019, 5:00–7:00pm

Faculty House, 64 Morningside Drive, Columbia University

*please check the announcement board in the first floor lobby for room information

Seminar Co-Chairs:

Jue Guo, Barnard College, Columbia University

Glenda Chao, Ursinus College

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