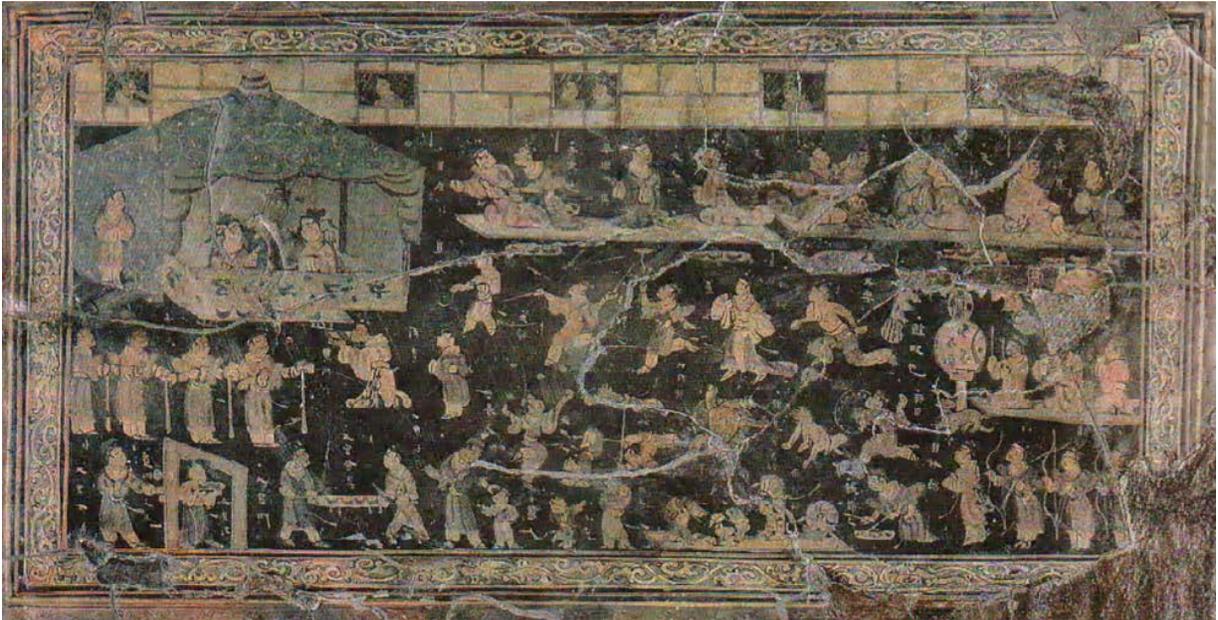




EARLY CHINA SEMINAR
LECTURE SERIES

Feasts and Gifts: Food Redistribution in Early Imperial China

Moonsil Lee Kim · Rhode Island College



Food bestowals through feasts and gifts in early imperial China were not only symbolic gestures used by emperors for political purposes, but also provided practical solutions to continue the empires in a sustainable way. While feasts and gifts emphasized the social hierarchies among various population groups, they also solved or prevented food crises that individuals would otherwise have experienced because of their specific positions in the society. For low-level officials, peasants, widows, and slaves, imperial food bestowals through feasts and gifts were key opportunities to enhance their dietary conditions or economic status. Even convict laborers who were not allowed to join in the “dividing of the sacrificial meat” (*fenzuo* 分胙) could benefit from sacrificial feasts, as they could purchase leftovers to supplement their regular grain-based diet. In this talk, “Statutes on Bestowals” (*cilü* 賜律), from the Zhangjia shan *Ernian lüling* 二年律令, and the Qin legal texts from Liye and Shuihudi will be analyzed in order to discuss how feasts and gifts in early imperial China were implemented for both symbolic and practical purposes.

March 26, 2021
4:30–6:30pm EST

Seminar Co-Chairs:

Jue Guo, Barnard College, Columbia University
Glenda Chao, Ursinus College

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