



EARLY CHINA SEMINAR
LECTURE SERIES

A Deep History of Human Activity in Jiuzhaigou National Park

Jade d'Alpoim Guedes · UC San Diego



China's *tuigeng huanlin* or "Returning Farmland to Forest" program has been widely praised as the world's largest and most successful ecosystem services program. It is also a major contributor to China's dramatic increase in forest cover from perhaps as low as 8% in 1960 to about 21% today. Located on the margins of the eastern Tibetan plateau, the Jiuzhaigou National Park is home to nearly two thousand species of plants along with many animals (at least 50 of which are rare or endangered). In order to preserve the biodiversity and the scenic lakes found in the Jiuzhaigou National Park and believing that the history of human impact inside the park was relatively short (less than 200–300 years), authorities decided to remove or minimize human impact, re-settling nine villages of Amdo Tibetans who originally occupied the area. Since 1999, park policies have prohibited residents from farming and wood cutting, and since 2001, residents can no longer herd animals

above tree line. For the Amdo Tibetans, however, these narratives are at odds with their own oral histories of occupation of the region as well the role they seek to play in maintaining the natural diversity of their home. Recent archaeological, geomorphological, archaeobotanical, and zooarchaeological evidence from the park, however, is now challenging assumptions about the shallow time depth of human occupation in the region; rather than harming local biodiversity, intermediate levels of disturbance created by small scale farming, pastoralism and tree cutting have contributed to the biodiversity of this region and have done so over the course of the past five thousand years.

January 20, 2023

4:30–6:30pm

Seminar Co-Chairs:

Glenda Chao, Ursinus College

Ethan Harkness, New York University