



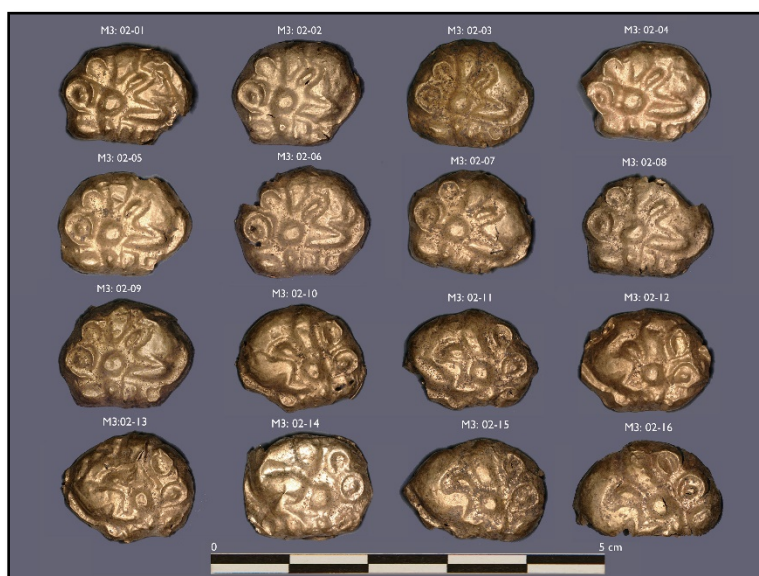
EARLY CHINA SEMINAR
LECTURE SERIES

Art and Technology: Early “Animal Style” Gold Artifacts Found in Northwest China and the Eurasian steppes

Yan (Fiona) Liu · Columbia University / Northwestern Polytechnical University (China)

Precious metals recently discovered from the Dongtaledede cemetery in the Xinjiang Altai region and other burial sites in northwest China (dating from the 9th century to the 3rd century BCE) have attracted much attention for their artistic mastery and fine craftsmanship. This is especially true of gold ornaments rendered in animal styles, such as ibex, snow leopard, boar, deer, and other zoomorphic figures, and which are closely linked to gold objects excavated in Central Asia and Southern Siberia.

Through discussing the industry and political economy of gold crafting in early China, we will look at the manufacturing techniques and ornamental details of “animal style” gold artifacts from an interdisciplinary perspective. Multispectral non-destructive analyses of tool marks and microstructure of selected samples reveal specific gold-making technologies of the time, such as double-sided carving and mould-pressing techniques. The results show that gold production was practiced under elite control and that craftsmanship varied in early Iron Age northwest China. Patterns of compositional data pertaining to the “animal style” appliquéés found in Dongtaledede, Balikun (Xinjiang), and Majiayuan (Gansu) sites and their counterparts in the Eurasian steppes also point to various mineral provenances.



March 3, 2023, 4:30–6:30pm

Faculty House, 64 Morningside Drive, Columbia University

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

Seminar Co-Chairs:

Glenda Chao, Ursinus College

Ethan Harkness, New York University

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