



EARLY CHINA SEMINAR
LECTURE SERIES

Manufacturing Early China (MERCH): A Multi-disciplinary Investigation into the Rise, Development and Impacts of Mass Production in Early China

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While it is widely accepted among scholars of Early China that mass production characterized several industries, or at least parts of them by the end of the first millennium BCE, this fact has not been accorded the historical importance it deserves. Among economic historians, mass production is widely recognized to have played a role in sweeping economic, political and social changes but is also seen as strictly a modern, post-Industrial Revolution phenomenon. If mass-production did exist in Early China it is reasonable to expect that it had a potentially large impact on economic, political and social developments. The MERCH project will explore these issues. Why did mass production arise in the first place? How did it develop over time? What were its economic, social and political impacts? This talk will sketch out the fundamental questions, approaches and potential sources of the MERCH project.

October 9th, 2026, 4:30–6:30 pm EST

403 Kent Hall, 1140 Amsterdam Ave, Columbia University and online via Zoom

Seminar Co-Chairs:

Glenda Chao, Ursinus College

Ethan Harkness, New York University