On the Margins of the Textual Tradition: Works in Progress
Sponsored by the Society of Fellows

February 20 - February 21, 2014

Schedule of Events

Organizers:
Stefan Kamola, Cotsen Fellow in History; Kate Liszka, Cotsen Fellow in Art and Archaeology

The aim of our workshop is to gather scholars from across the Princeton community who conduct research involving textual sources about groups who produced no indigenous textual tradition. For example, we are interested in work on nomadic and “barbarian” groups, but also on pretextual groups such as the jahiliyya Arabs and “silent” civilizations such as Sparta. Our aim is to open a dialogue across disciplinary boundaries about how we analyze our sources for non-textual groups.

The opening event of the workshop is a public talk entitled “Ancient China and Its Enemies Ten Years Later: Questions on a Second Edition.” Professor Nicola DiCosmo of the Institute for Advanced Studies will reflect on the decade that has passed since the publication of his landmark book, Ancient China and its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History (Cambridge 2002). Professor DiCosmo is currently preparing a second edition of Ancient China to incorporate new material and respond to changing academic theories from the past decade.

On Friday from 2-5pm, we have convened a roundtable workshop in the Joseph Henry House. Twelve prearranged speakers, representing various disciplines, geographies, and periods, each have a few minutes to present aspects of their work relating to the study of non-textual peoples and the sources available for them. After every three presentations, we will open the floor to general discussion among all attendees. Presentations and discussion will continue for two hours; the final hour will consist of hors d’oeuvre and a final informal discussion of the ideas raised by the roundtable and by Professor DiCosmo’s talk.

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Thursday 20 February, 2014
010 East Pyne, 7:00

We have organized four panels of speakers (see below), based on the information we received about each presenter’s work. We will give each panel 30 minutes for individual presentations and discussion. We encourage each presenter to limit his or her remarks to 5 minutes or less, in order to give time for discussion. Presentations are an opportunity to introduce the major methodological questions and problems that we have encountered in our research, rather than to give comprehensive overviews of our work. The hope is that, by identifying related questions that appear in different forms across disciplines, we can build a meaningful discussion of how to conduct research when traditional research resources fail.

At 4:00 p.m. we will break for hors d’oeuvre and reconvene for a longer synthesizing discussion covering the day’s presentations and Thursday’s talk by Nicola DiCosmo.

Panels

1. Silent Groups
   - Ursula Brosseder (IAS) – 15 years of Xiongnu archaeology
   - Christina Halperin (Art and Archaeology) – Ordinary Mayans
   - Susan Naquin (emerita, History) – Artisans in late imperial China

2. Groups known through other people’s texts
   - John Baines (emeritus, Oxford) – literate and non-literate culture in Egypt
   - Merle Eisenberg (History) – Non-Romans through Roman eyes
   - Tineke D’Haeseleer (Society of Fellows) – The Koguryo and Bohai/Parhae

3. Reconstructed pasts
   - Helmut Reimitz (History) – Germani
   - Stefan Kamola (Society of Fellows) – The Oghuz Turks
   - Jonathan Fine (Art and Archaeology) – The Bamum Kingdom of West Cameroon

4. Applied ethnicities
   - Kate Liszka (Society of Fellows) – The Medjay Egypt and Nubia
   - Paul Goldin (IAS) – The “destructive” Yi
   - Nadav Samin (NES) – The Bedouin impact on modern Arabian society