

## **Dr. Li Liu**

### **Bio:**

Li Liu joined the Stanford faculty in 2010. Previously, she taught archaeology at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia for 14 years and was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. She holds a BA in History (Archaeology Major) from Northwest University in China, an MA in Anthropology from Temple University in Philadelphia, and a PhD in Anthropology from Harvard University. Her research interests include the archaeology of early China (Neolithic and Bronze Age), ritual practices in ancient China, cultural interactions between China and other parts of the Old World, the domestication of plants and animals in China, the development of complex societies and state formation, settlement archaeology, and urbanism.

### **Lecture title:**

*Emergence of Urbanism and Sociopolitical Landscapes in Late Neolithic North China*

### **Abstract:**

During the late third to early second millennium BC, North China underwent significant social transformations marked by the transition from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age, the emergence of early states, and the rise of urbanism. These sociopolitical developments coincided with climatic fluctuations, natural disasters, intensified inter-group interactions—including conflict—and the widespread adoption of new technologies, such as metallurgy and the introduction of domesticated crops and animals from the steppe regions. The emergence of Shimao and its surrounding satellite fortifications signifies the rise of a newly developed regional system on the Loess Plateau, characterized by distinctive social features that predate the formation of dynastic Bronze Age states in the Central Plains of China.

## **Dr. Nan Di**

### **Bio:**

Dr. Nan Di is an Associate Research Fellow at the Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology. He has extensive experience in field archaeology throughout northern Shaanxi and has directed or participated in several major excavation projects, including the recent excavations at the Lushanmao and Shimao sites. Dr. Di has published more than twenty scholarly papers and co-authored two archaeological excavation reports.

### **Lecture title:**

*Early States on the Loess Plateau*

### **Abstract:**

The third millennium BCE marked a critical period in the formation and development of early Chinese civilization. During this time, the Loess Plateau in northern Shaanxi witnessed increasing differentiation in settlement size and growing social complexity.

Following the emergence of high-ranking settlements, large palatial structures, and public facilities, the region progressed into the late Longshan period, characterized by the appearance of mega sites such as Lushanmao and Shimao. These sites featured monumental architecture, elaborate religious and ritual practices, and large quantities of finely crafted jade artifacts. Moreover, a multi-tiered network of surrounding settlements further reflected a sophisticated regional organization.

Taken together, these developments offer compelling evidence that by this stage, the Loess Plateau had formed a highly complex social system—one that may be considered indicative of an early state.

### **Dr. Yahui He**

#### **Bio:**

Yahui He is an environmental archaeologist specializing in archaeobotany in East Asia. Her research explores the dynamics of human-plant relationships within multi-scalar socio-political contexts during the processes of sedentism and urbanism.

She investigates plant-based food and drink practices in the Northern Zone of China (including the northern Loess Plateau and southern Mongolian Plateau) using a multi-proxy microfossil approach. Her work explores these practices across diverse social settings, including households, communities, and mortuary contexts. Yahui's collaborative research extends to plant exploitation, dispersal, and associated technologies such as plant food fermentation and bast fiber production across mainland China and beyond, including sites like Erlitou in Henan, Taiwan, and Honduras.

Currently, Yahui is a Postdoctoral Scholar at the Stanford Archaeology Center. She earned her PhD from Stanford University and was a Li Foundation Fellow at the Needham Research Institute in Cambridge, UK.

#### **Lecture title:**

*The Sociopolitics of Drinking Practices in the Late Neolithic North Loess Plateau, China*

#### **Abstract:**

During the late Neolithic period in the Yellow River region (ca. 5,000-4,000 cal. BP), a significant wave of urbanization unfolded, marked by the rapid development of settlement hierarchies, social stratification, and interregional interactions, which laid the foundation for the emergence of early state-level political structures. This period also witnessed the proliferation of sophisticated pottery types, notably vessels used for alcohol consumption and serving purposes, including pitchers and cups, in north China. However, the role of pottery assemblages, plant exploitation, and related food practices in mediating and shaping socio-political dynamics within both urban and rural contexts in the north Loess Plateau region remains largely unexplored. This study presents a comparative microfossil analysis of plant-based drinks from elite and non-elite settlements and elite mortuary contexts, shedding light on how drinking practices shaped the social relationships, political structures, and urbanization processes in the region during the 5th millennium BP.

## **Dr. Jay Xu**

### **Bio:**

Dr. Jay Xu has had more than forty years of international museum experience as a research scholar, curator, and museum director, having most recently directed the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco from June 2008 through April 2025. Previously he worked in various capacities at Shanghai Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Seattle Art Museum, and the Art Institute of Chicago.

Xu had his undergraduate education in Shanghai, China, and earned his MA and PhD at Princeton University. An award-winning scholar of Chinese art, Xu focuses his academic research on ancient Chinese art and archaeology.

In 2015, Xu became the first museum director of Asian descent elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 2022, he was appointed to serve on the Congressional Commission to Study the Potential Creation of a National Museum of Asian Pacific American History and Culture. In 2024, Xu was elected to the governing board of the American Alliance of Museums.

### **Lecture title:**

*Along the Alpine Road: Cultural Encounters Between the Wei River Valley and the Sichuan Basin*

### **Abstract:**

Traffic between the Wei River valley of Shaanxi and the Sichuan Basin was legendarily difficult, as two mountain ranges between them present formidable barriers. However, historical accounts record that, despite the harsh terrain, the Qin army dispatched by the future First Emperor of China managed to invade and conquer the Sichuan Basin in 316 BCE via alpine roads hewn on steep mountainsides. Field archaeology in modern times has further revealed fascinating traces of cultural contacts between those two regions that stretch far back in time. The present lecture will examine the archaeological record of those interactions and discuss their expressions in material culture.

## **Mr. Zhanwei Sun**

### **Bio:**

Zhanwei Sun is a Research Fellow at the Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology, specializing in the archaeology of Bronze Age China. He has directed and participated in more than 20 archaeological projects. He served as the director of the excavation at the Zhaigou site, which was recognized as one of the “Top Ten New Archaeological Discoveries in China” in 2023. Sun has published two books and more than thirty scholarly papers.

### **Lecture title:**

*The Central Plains and Surrounding Areas in 1200 BC: Archaeological Discovery and Significance of the Zhaigou Site in Shaanxi*

**Abstract:**

Since 2022, excavations at the Zhaigou Site have uncovered twelve distinct functional zones, including a large rammed-earth architectural complex, covering an area of approximately 3 million square meters. The rammed-earth structures alone account for 20,000 square meters. Eleven large-scale tombs have been unearthed, yielding over 400 burial artifacts. Notably, the discovery of abundant chariot and horse remains provides crucial evidence for understanding the eastward transmission of chariot technology and the formation of chariot-and-horse burial customs.

The excavated bronze chariot fittings closely resemble those found at the upper cultural layers of Yinxu in Anyang, while artifacts such as gold earrings display distinct regional characteristics. These findings reflect the close interaction between the Loess Plateau region and the Shang dynasty, as well as the strong influence exerted by the Shang over surrounding areas. Together, they offer valuable insight into the state structure and governance strategies of the Shang polity.

**Dr. Tianlong Jiao****Bio:**

Dr. Tianlong Jiao specializes in Chinese and Pacific archaeology and art history. He has more than two decades of curatorial and teaching experience in the United States and Hong Kong. He received his B.A. from Peking University, M.A. from the Graduate School of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and Ph.D. from Harvard University.

Prior to his current appointment as Chief Curator and Vice President of Collections and Programs at Bowers Museum, Dr. Jiao served as Head Curator at the Hong Kong Palace Museum; the Josef de Heer Curator of Asian Art at the Denver Art Museum; Head and Curator of Chinese Art at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco; Chief Curator of the Hong Kong Maritime Museum; and Chairman of the Department of Anthropology at the Bishop Museum.

He has authored or co-authored eight books and more than one hundred research papers in both Chinese and English. His book *The Neolithic of Southeast China* (Cambria Press, 2007) won the 2007 Philip and Eugenia Cho Award for Outstanding Scholarship in Asian Studies.

**Lecture title:**

*The Ritualization of Jade in Late Neolithic Loess Plateau: A Comparative Perspective*

**Abstract:**

The function of a certain variety of jade objects was transformed in several regions in China since the 4th millennium BCE. From pure decorative jewelry to the agent of ritual ceremony, these jades served as medium to connect the living with the spirits. However, the most conspicuous change happened in the Loess Plateau in the late third millennium BCE, as represented by Lushanmao and Shimao. Jade axes and knives were used in the ritual to build elite buildings and defensive walls, a unique practice among all contemporary societies in Neolithic China. Comparable practice to use jade in ritual activities can also be observed in Sanxingdui, a political and cultural center in

southwest China during the late 2nd millennium BCE. The meaning and significance of this kind of practice reflect the diversity of the ritualization of jade in early China.

### **Dr. Jianrong Chong**

#### **Bio:**

Dr. Jianrong Chong serves as the Director of both the Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology and the Shaanxi Archaeological Museum. He is also the President of the Shaanxi Archaeological Society. His expertise lies in the archaeology of the Shang and Zhou dynasties. Dr. Chong has directed and participated in more than twenty major archaeological projects in Shaanxi, four of which were selected among the “Top Ten New Archaeological Discoveries in China,” and one of which received the “First Class Award in Field Archaeology.” He has published four books and more than seventy academic articles.

#### **Lecture title:**

*Tracing the Ancient Rui State: Archaeological Discoveries at the Liujiawa Site in Shaanxi*

#### **Abstract:**

The ancient State of Rui was originally established as the Rui estate granted by King Wu of the Western Zhou dynasty. During the reign of King Cheng, it was officially enfeoffed as a vassal state. Successive rulers of Rui held important positions in the Zhou royal court and enjoyed a high status. The state lasted for over 400 years until it was annexed by the State of Qin in the mid-Spring and Autumn period.

The excavation of the Liujiawa site in Chengcheng County, Shaanxi, has unveiled the mystery of the Rui State, yielding a wealth of precious artifacts, including gold, bronze, jade, stone, and lacquered wooden items. The site is notable for its well-preserved layout, rich cultural content, large scale, and high rank, making it one of the most significant discoveries in recent years in the field of Shang and Zhou archaeology. It provides invaluable material evidence for studying the historical culture, social organization, and lineage of the Rui State, as well as broader research into the archaeology, burial systems, and sociopolitical history of the Zhou dynasty along the Yellow River and in Shaanxi.

This lecture presents the major archaeological finds at the Liujiawa site, tracing the history of this mysterious Zhou-era vassal state in the northern Wei River region and offering a glimpse into the ancient culture of the Western and Eastern Zhou dynasties.

### **Mr. Yihua Xin**

#### **Bio:**

Yihua Xin is a Research Fellow at the Baoji Institute of Archaeology and serves as Vice President of the Society for Qin Culture Studies. He has conducted extensive archaeological excavations throughout Shaanxi, with a specialization in Zhou and Qin archaeology, paleography, and the study of prehistoric populations in China. Xin has published nearly 100 papers and three books.

**Lecture title:**

*Discovery and Research of the Aristocratic Cemetery of the Western Zhou Dynasty in Shigushan, Baoji*

**Abstract:**

The discovery of the Western Zhou aristocratic cemetery at Shigushan in Baoji, Shaanxi is an extraordinary case of accidental archaeology, uncovered during local home construction. The tombs were remarkably well-preserved, and the bronze objects unearthed are both distinctive and of great academic value. Among the finds are three Western Zhou bronze tables—the only known examples of their kind in the world—and ritual bronzes bearing the character “Hu”, the clan emblem of the Jiang-Rong lineage.

The integration of both Shang and Zhou stylistic elements in the ritual not only confirms the tomb occupants as members of the Hu clan, a noble branch of the Jiang-Rong people during the Western Zhou dynasty but also provides vivid material evidence of political alliances and intermarriage between the Jiang-Rong and the Zhou royal house over 3,000 years ago.

**Mr. Jian Fu****Bio:**

Jian Fu is an Associate Research Fellow in the Department of Archaeology at Emperor Qin Shi Huang's Mausoleum Site Museum. His work focuses primarily on archaeological excavations within the mausoleum complex of the First Emperor of Qin. He has participated in several major excavation projects, including Pit K9901; the cluster tombs at the northeast corner of the Inner City; the architectural remains of the Residential and Ceremonial Halls; the East Gate of the Outer City; ancillary structures between the Inner and Outer East Gates; and the East Gate of the Inner City.

**Lecture title:**

*A Comparative Study of the Qin Terracotta Warriors and the Hellenistic Sculptures*

**Abstract:**

In the 3rd century BCE, following Alexander the Great's eastward campaigns, Hellenistic artworks began to spread across Central Asia and into regions further east. This presentation compares the Terracotta Warriors of the First Emperor's mausoleum with Hellenistic sculpture, examining their respective cultural contexts, artistic design principles, and sculptural techniques.

The comparative study reveals that despite the temporal overlap, there is no evidence of direct artistic transmission or influence between Hellenistic sculpture and the Qin Terracotta Army. The two traditions developed independently within their cultural frameworks.

**Mr. Jianku Ren****Bio:**

Jianku Ren is a Research Fellow at Emperor Qin Shi Huang's Mausoleum Site Museum. He participated in the excavations of Pits 1 and 2 of the Terracotta Army. He has published more than twenty papers on topics including pre-Qin, Qin, and Han history and archaeology; Sino-foreign cultural exchange; the political thought of the Qin dynasty; and museum studies.

**Lecture title:**

*The Milk Stirring Function of the Cocoon-Shaped Pot*

**Abstract:**

Cocoon-shaped vessels are representative artifacts of Qin culture. While they are commonly described as containers for storing water or wine, their fundamental function was likely that of a churn—used for processing dairy products such as cream, cheese, or fermented milk. This interpretation is supported by their distinctive, elongated form, characterized by both long and short axes. When shaken or rocked along the long axis, the liquid inside would collide more efficiently, accelerating the separation of milk fat and the fermentation process.

In the Han dynasty, officials titled *dòngma* were explicitly tasked with producing fermented mare's milk. The character *dòng* means "to push and pull" or "to rock," aptly describing the physical motion required for churning. Archaeological finds from the Yehud site in Israel have yielded swing churns, whose lower halves bear a strong resemblance to the form of cocoon-shaped vessels, offering valuable comparative evidence.

Ethnographic data further supports this view, consistently showing that the processing of animal milk into dairy products involves sustained shaking or agitation.