

Early China Seminar at Columbia University 2011-2012

In 2011-2012, Professors Li Feng 李峰 (Columbia University) and David W. Pankenier 班大為 (Lehigh University) have co-chaired an overloaded program in the Early China Seminar. The seminar year began on October 1, 2011 with two paper presentations by Kenneth Holloway (Florida State University) on “The Transition from Immanent to Transcendent: Situating Religion in the ‘Xing zi mingchu’ 性自命出 between the *Analecets* and the *Daode jing*,” and Andrew Myer (CUNY, Brooklyn College) on “The Baseness of Knights Truly Runs Deep 士之賤也, 亦甚矣” which deals with the complex debate about the status of the *Shi* 士 in the Warring States period.

The interests in excavated texts continued to be explored later in two more papers: the first by Charles Sanft (Institute for Advanced Study, Nov. 19) introduces the contents and styles of the population registers of the Qin Empire recently excavated from a well in Liye 里耶, Hunan; in the second paper, centering on a comparison of the *Xing zi ming chu* from Guodian and the *Xing qing lun* 性情論 among the Shanghai Museum manuscripts, Matthias L. Richter (University of Colorado at Boulder, Feb. 11) argues that the different codicological arrangements of the two texts seem to reflect different stages of textual accretion in the Warring States period. Archaeological data are dealt more extensively in two papers: Lillian Tseng’s (NYU, Nov. 19) paper, “Picturing Heaven in Early China,” reviews the archaeological excavation of the Han dynasty Bright Hall 明堂 in Xi’an and discusses its meaning for political legitimacy. Sun Yan’s (Gettysburg College, Feb. 11) paper, “Material Culture, Social Identities and Power of the Western Zhou,” takes up the issue of cultural and group identity as reflected in the cemetery of the state of Yu in Baoji and the most recently discovered cemetery of the Peng 棚 Lineage in Shanxi.

A highlight of the ECS activity in 2011-2012 is the international conference, “**Before Empire: An International Conference on the Early History and Archaeology of Qin**” (April 6-7, 2012), that it co-sponsored with the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, Columbia University. The conference brought a group of four senior archaeologists from China, responsible for some of the most important discoveries relating to the early Qin state, together with leading Western experts to discuss their implications for understanding the early development of Qin and the eventual rise of the Qin Empire in 221 BC. The conference was well attended by scholars from all over the country and it was one of the most important events in Chinese archaeology in North America in recent years.

Announcement: On May 12, 2012, the last meeting of the year of the Early China Seminar will be held in the form of a small conference with a line of four papers. The meeting will focus on the Han-Wei period. Topics to be discussed include the background of the *Chuci* 楚辭 commentary, the cultural image of the Yue 越 people, the archaeology of the Straight Road 直道 of the Qin Empire, and recent archaeological surveys of Pingcheng 平城, the capital of Northern Wei, etc. Scholars and graduate students beyond the usual ECS-group are welcome to attend, but prior contacts with the seminar’s co-chairs are appreciated.



Early China Seminar on October 1, 2011



"Before Empire: An International Conference on the Early History and Archaeology of Qin" (April 6-7, 2012). Professor Robert Hymes (Columbia University) giving his opening remarks.



Early Qin Conference, April 6-7, 2012. Professor Yuri Pines (Hebrew University, Israel) giving his paper presentation

of Qin and the eventual rise of the Qin Empire.