

Inner Asian and Altaic Studies Lecture

Wednesday, March 2, 2022

1:15 pm - 2:30 pm Eastern Time

Online event: [Register for Zoom link](#)

Also at: iaas.fas.harvard.edu



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Deer Stone and Khirigsuur Culture: First Emergence of Inner-Asian Nomadic Empires

Scholars still debate the origin of the ancient state in Inner Asia, with the majority believing that the nomadic Xiongnu people formed the earliest instance in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. The social and political structures of preceding periods, however, are still poorly understood. Some scholars have suggested that earlier tribal associations had also been structured, but until recently it had not been possible to draw definitive conclusions due to a lack of written sources and insufficient archaeological datasets. Newly constructed archaeological databases from Mongolia have helped shed some light on pre-Xiongnu social and political structures. The distribution and quantity of the Deer Stone and Khirigsuur monuments provide a clearer picture of the political organization of Late Bronze Age nomadic groups (ca. 1300-700 BC). Based on the detection of major ritual and funerary sites, it is now possible to identify political and economic centers that existed a thousand years prior to the Xiongnu state. Evidence shows that horse use and domestication played a crucial role in this big shift in the nomadic lifestyle, allowing for the development of a powerful Late Bronze Age sociopolitical system