

Using Big Data to Think through Tibetan History

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Abstract:

In an effort to ask and answer new questions about Tibetan history, I have turned to increasingly large data sets over the course of my career. My second book project was to study Amdo history, but as much as I enjoyed exploring, I could not find any text or set of texts that could really help me capture the big picture. Expanding on an idea from Gene Smith, and working with others, I built a database of hundreds of Amdo monasteries with dozens of fields of data (GIS location, foundation data, number of monks, rooms, livestock, etc). This led to building datasets on hundreds of incarnation series and monastic colleges as well, which have shaped the direction of my book project in significant ways. Lately, and again with others, I have worked with larger datasets and the statistical computing and graphing programming language called “R” to examine existing data on Tibetan (mostly monk’s) longevity in comparison with Chinese monks, Chinese literati, and Europeans in history. I hope to continue to work with even larger datasets by examining the hydrology of the Tibetan plateau with climate scientists, to see if new perspectives of the large arcs of Tibetan history might be reframed by a deeper understanding of climate data.



Friday, March 3, 2023

1:15 pm - 2:30 pm EST

Huguette and Michel Porté Seminar Room, S250 CGIS-South

Online: register at <https://iaas.fas.harvard.edu/pages/iaas-lecture-series>