

Inner Asian and Altaic Studies 2024-25 Lecture Series

Early Herders of Inner Asia and Subsistence Transformations in the Altai

Abstract:

The Afanasievo culture in the Altai Mountains (ca. 3300-2800 BCE) has long captured our attention as the first pastoralists to spread to Inner Asia. Known almost exclusively through osteological remains and material culture from mortuary contexts, settlement data have remained absent for characterizing the subsistence economy, access to domesticated horses, and interaction with Indigenous hunter-gatherer communities in the Altai region. Recent excavations by the Rise of the Altai Mountain Pastoralism Project (RAMPP) at Nizhnyaya Sooru located in the Altai Republic provide a rich record of Afanasievo domestic deposition, architectural remains, and occupational history, representing a well-preserved and high-use settlement. Utilizing a range of analytical approaches, including zooarchaeology, ZooMS, faunal stable isotope analysis, paleoethnobotany, human and animal paleogenomics, radiocarbon dating, and material culture analysis, the RAMPP team provides a close examination of Afanasievo daily life that has so far foiled understandings of how early pastoralists settled in the Altai and connected to new environments and social landscapes of local hunter-gatherers.



Prof. Taylor Hermes
University of Arkansas

Wednesday, March 5, 2025

1:15 pm - 2:15 pm ET

Thomas Chan-Soo Kang Room, S050 CGIS-South

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Online: register at iaas.fas.harvard.edu