

**NOVEMBER LECTURE**

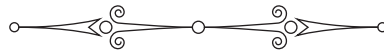
Wednesday, November 16th, 2016

University of Calgary

Tom Oliver Room, ES 162, 7:30pm

***Before the Khans: The Archaeology of the Xiongnu Empire in Mongolia (209 BC-200 AD)*****Dr. Erik Johannesson**

**ABSTRACT** - A prevailing view in anthropological and archaeological theory has been that nomadic societies are incapable of forming complex political polities that endure in the *longue durée*. Here, Dr. Johannesson challenges this view by presenting the results of over a decade of archaeological research on the Xiongnu Empire in Mongolia. According to Chinese texts, the Xiongnu Empire was formed when the charismatic leader Motun unified the nomadic steppe tribes of Mongolia and Siberia into a powerful confederacy that quickly emerged as a regional enemy of the Han Dynasty. The formation of this polity is identified archaeologically with sweeping changes in material culture, technology, and funerary customs. Drawing on fieldwork from Baga Gazaryn Chuluu in the north Gobi and Shombuuzin Belchir in the Altai foothills, this presentation will explore the archaeology of the Xiongnu Empire and how political centralization manifests in mortuary practice. Adopting a diachronic perspective, Xiongnu mortuary monuments will be discussed vis-à-vis preceding funerary traditions to illustrate that Xiongnu tombs represent a conspicuous inversion of previous customs. A scalar landscape approach will then be used to demonstrate how mortuary ideology was manipulated by the Xiongnu elite to incorporate local lineages of leadership into a broader Xiongnu political economy. Finally, the reopening of tombs in antiquity and osteological evidence of violent trauma will be discussed to illustrate that mortuary contexts formed important loci of Xiongnu state-craft, and arenas in which political ideologies were both imposed and contested.



**Dr. Erik Johannesson** earned his Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill and specializes in landscape and mortuary archaeology. In particular, his research interests center on how mobile populations organize themselves across landscapes economically, politically, and ideologically, and how political centralization and belief-systems are represented in mortuary practice. Dr. Johannesson has pursued these interests in Mongolia, Russia, Greece, and most recently in Egypt's Valley of the Kings. He has also conducted fieldwork in southwestern and southeastern US, and has taught archaeology at North Carolina University, Meredith College, and Pacific Lutheran University. Having relocated to Alberta, Dr. Johannesson manages the Bodo Archaeological Site and Centre in East Central Alberta and also works for Lifeways of Canada.