The Chinese Writing System and Its Dialogue with Sumerian, Egyptian, and Mesoamerican Writing Systems

MAY 30-31, 2015

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Confucius Institute of Rutgers University (CIRU)
Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
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Rutgers University Inn and Conference Center
178 Ryders Lane
Douglass Campus, Rutgers University
New Brunswick, NJ

Conference Speakers

Sumerian, Cuneiform Writing System
Gong, Yushu (Peking University)
Jones, Philip (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology)
Schatmand-Besserat, Denise (The University of Texas at Austin)
Ilona Zsolnay (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology)

Egyptian Hieroglyphic Writing System
Chen, Yongsheng (Brown University)
Darnell, John (Yale University)
Depuydt, Leo (Brown University)
Roberson, Joshua A. (Camden College and University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology)

Olmec/Maya Writing System
Carrasco, Michael D. (Florida State University)
Chinchilla Mazariegos, Oswaldo (Yale University)
Rossi, Franco and Saturno, William (Boston University)
Mora Marin, David (University of North Carolina)
Zhang, He (William Paterson)

Oracle Bone Inscription and Archaic Chinese
Chen, Kuang Yu (Rutgers University)
Huang, Yaping (Shandong University)
Hwang, Mingchorng (Academia Sinica, Taipei)
Smith, Jonathan (Christopher Newport University)
Song, Zhenhao (Institute of History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing)
Wang, Hui (Shaanxi Normal University)
Wang, Yunzhi (Paleographic Center, Henan University)

Panelists and Discussants
Allan, Sarah (Dartmouth College)
Ning, Xin (Uln University)
Schwartz, Adam (New York University)
Simmons, Richard (Rutgers University)
Tu, Ching-I (Rutgers University)
Tschanz, Dietrich (Rutgers University)

Organizing Committee
Chen, Kuang Yu (Rutgers University)
Gong, Yushu (Peking University)
Tschanz, Dietrich (Rutgers University)
Tu, Ching-I (Rutgers University)

The Four Earliest Writing Systems
FRIDAY MAY 29, 2015
Participants check in at the Rutgers Inn and Conference Center.

SATURDAY MAY 30, 2015
8:00-9:00
Registration and Refreshments

9:00-9:20
Welcome and Introduction
Ching-I Tu, Director, Confucius Institute of Rutgers University (CIRU)

Opening Remarks
Kuang Yu Chen, Rutgers University

Panel 1 Theorizing Writing and Writing Systems
Moderator: Sarah Allan (Dartmouth College) (9:20 – 10:50)

Leo Depuydt (Brown University)
The Scientific Theory of Egyptian Hieroglyphic Writing in Boole’s, Saussure’s, and Maxwell’s Footsteps

Michael D. Carrasco (Florida State University)
Conventions and Linguistic Tropes in Olmec Art and Writing

Ilona Zsolnay (University of Pennsylvania)
Writing, What was it Good for? An Investigation into Intent

Coffee Break (10:50-11:00)------------------------§

Panel 2 Probing Origins of Writing
Moderator: Ching-I Tu (Rutgers University) (11:00 – 12:30)

Denise Schmandt-Besserat (The University of Texas at Austin)
Writing after Accounting in the Ancient Near East

Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos (Yale University)
A Comparative Approach to the Origin of Writing in Mesoamerica

Hui Wang (Shanxi Normal University)
Methodology for Dating the Origin of Chinese Writing System

Coffee Break (12:30-1:30)------------------------§

Panel 3 Proto-writings, Art and Symbols
Moderator: Tschanz, Dietrich (Rutgers University) (1:30-3:00)

Wang Yunzhi (Henan University)
Chinese Writing System Occurred in the Yellow River Basin

He Zhang (William Paterson University)
Identification of a Group of Olmec Jade Designs

Yongsheng Chen (Brown University)
A Comparative Study of the Determinative in Egyptian and Chinese

Coffee Break (3:00-3:10)------------------------§

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Coffee Break (3:00-3:10)------------------------§

The Four Systems

Panel 4 Social and Cultural Context in the Formation of Writing
Moderator: Richard Simmons (Rutgers University) (3:30-5:40)

David Mora Marin (University of North Carolina)
The Social and Cultural Context of Early Mayan Writing and the Development of Logographic and Logosyllabic Spelling Practices

Yaping Huang (Shandong University)
The Study of the Social Context of Literacy on the Oracle Bone Inscription in Shang Dynasty

Mingchong Hwang (Academia Sinica, Taipei)
Rethinking the Origin of Chinese Writing: Gene, Ethnic Groups, and Writing Systems

Jonathan Smith (Christopher Newport University)
Writing Time: The Luni-Stellar Solution to the Origins of the Chinese Sexagenary Cycle, and the Problem of Indigenercy

John Darnell (Yale University)
Illustrated Rocks and Illuminated Bodies: the Ritual Cosmographic Precursors of Egyptian Writing

--------------------------------------------------------- Lunch (12:20-1:20) ----------------------------------------------------------§

SUNDAY MAY 31, 2015

Panel 5 Archeology and the Origin of Writing Systems
Moderator: Richard Simmons (Rutgers University) (9:00-10:30)

William A. Saturno and Franco Rossi (Boston University)
An Archeology of Early Maya Writing

Yushu Gong (Peking University)
Principles for Creating Signs Used in Ancient Writing Systems from Sumer, Egypt and China

Kuang Yu Chen (Rutgers University)
A Model for Dating the Genesis of the Chinese Writing System: Comparison with Other First Writings

Coffee Break (10:30-10:40)------------------------§

Panel 6 Transformation, Obsolescence, and Cataloguing
Moderator: Xin Ning (Jilin University) (10:40-12:10)

Zhenhao Song (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing)
Oracle Bone Inscriptions: Recent Work on Cataloguing

Philip Jones (University of Pennsylvania)
The Beginning of the End: Longer Term Perspectives on the Decline of Cuneiform in First Millennium BCE Babylonian

Joshua A. Roberson (University of Pennsylvania)

Coffee Break (12:20-1:20)------------------------§

Panel 7 Overview and Discussion
(1:30-2:30)
Panelists: Zhenhao Song, Sarah Allan, David Mora Marin, Michael Carrasco, Philip Jones, Ilona Zsolnay, Joshua Roberson, Leo Depuydt, Adam Schwartz

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