

The Chinese University of Hong Kong Department of Geography and Resource Management

will present a seminar

by

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Moves along the Road: Climate change and farmers' northwesterly migration from central China

Abstract:

A common Chinese proverb—"A peacock flies southeast"—could describe the normative idea of the southeasterly spread of agriculturalists as a trend in historical China. Indeed, northwest China was the least attractive place to agriculturalists because of much harsher climatic conditions. The present study is the first attempt to bridge geographical and historical methodologies considering the influences of climate change to supplement current ideas about Chinese migration. The present study surveyed 195 individual cases of northwesterly migration of agriculturalists from central China and along Silk Road Region from 200BC to 1400AD, comparing historical records of these migration cases to extensive paleoclimate data. We found statistical evidence that the northwesterly movements of farmers increased when climate was drier. The historical records were consulted to explain this seemingly atypical pattern. We conclude that the agriculturalists' northwesterly migration increased during dry periods mainly as a response to the southward invasion of northern nomads, which was also a result of increased aridity. These conclusions add to the growing literature that indicates climate change as a central driver in intergroup conflict, having geopolitical implications. Forward-looking strategies, including the One Belt and One Road Initiative, ought to consider the shrinkage of rainfall under the potential threats of global warming. Increased aridity may have sizeable effects on political, social, or economic structures far from north-central China.

About the Speaker:

Dr. Qing Pei is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Sciences at the Education University of Hong Kong. He received his PhD from the Department of Geography, The University of Hong Kong. Before joining Education University of Hong Kong, Dr. Pei worked as the fellow at the University of Cambridge, UK; the Swiss National Science Foundation Fellow at the University of Zurich, Switzerland; and the Post-doctoral Fellow at the University of Hong Kong. His research interests are running between both physical and human geography, which mainly encompass climate change and human society, contemporary environmental problems and policies, and issues of sustainable development.

Language: English

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Time: 5:15-6:30pm

ZOOM Meeting Link:

**<https://cuhk.zoom.us/j/631231983>
(No password is required)**

~All are Welcome~

For any inquiries, please contact Prof. Harry Lee (Tel. 3943 8478 or Email: harrylee@cuhk.edu.hk).