"What was the Early Chinese Language Like?"

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4:30 p.m. Thursday, April 12
Brown Hall Room 1028

Dr. William H. Baxter is a historical linguist at the University of Michigan specializing in the history of the Chinese language. His talk will focus on recent research on the early Chinese language, and on the implications of this research for a deeper understanding of early Chinese culture. What was the early Chinese language really like? It is often tacitly assumed that both the language and the culture have undergone little essential change since ancient times. But all languages change continually over time, and Chinese is no exception.

Baxter’s publications include “A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology” (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992) and a number of articles in both English and Chinese. He is currently completing a book (working title: Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction), to be published by Oxford University Press, which presents a revised reconstruction of Old Chinese, utilizing newly available evidence from modern Chinese dialects, from languages with very early loanwords from Chinese, and from recently excavated early Chinese documents.

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