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FALL 2010 RESEARCH SEMINARS ON CHINA

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Monday, October 18, 12:00 noon
Tokiokia Room (Moore Hall 319)

Hongshan Chiefly Communities in Neolithic Northeastern China

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The Hongshan societies of northeastern China are among East Asia's earliest complex societies. They have been known largely from elaborate burials with carved jades in ceremonial platforms. The most monumental remains are concentrated in a "core zone" in western Liaoning province. Residential remains are less well known and most investigations of them have been in peripheral regions outside the core zone. Recent regional settlement pattern research around the well known ceremonial site of Dongshanzui has begun to document the communities that built and used Hongshan core zone monuments, and to assess their developmental dynamics. The core zone, like the Hongshan periphery, appears to have been organized into a series of small chiefly districts within which ceremonial activities were important integrative forces. Their estimated populations of less than 1000 are not much larger than those of districts in the periphery. The greater elaboration of their monumental architecture is thus not attributable to greater demographic scale. The evidence does not suggest that these districts were integrated into any larger-scale political entity. Further research will pursue the organization of statuses and economic activities within these communities.

Christian E. Peterson is an archaeologist specializing in the comparative study of early complex societies, regional settlement patterns, regional palaeodemographic reconstruction, household archaeology, and quantitative/spatial analysis. For the past 10 years he has conducted archaeological field research in NE China.