



THE GOLD-DIGGING MANIA OF 1957-59 AND THE BEGINNING OF NORTH VIETNAMESE ARCHAEOLOGY

2023 **November 10 (Fri) 16:00-**

**Seminar Room 213, 2nd Floor, Inamori Foundation
Memorial Building, CSEAS, Kyoto University**



Speaker

Prof. Keith Taylor

CSEAS Guest Scholar
Professor, Cornell University

Detail



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In 1957 a railroad construction crew discovered a brick tomb dating from the late 2nd or early 3rd centuries CE. Local villagers immediately broke into it and looted its contents, looking for gold. At the same time, an entrepreneur specializing in finding gold persuaded provincial authorities to grant him permission to dig for gold on a mountain and to share what he found with them. The simultaneous discovery nearby of another ancient brick tomb added to rumors about finding gold that spread over several provinces and penetrated Hanoi. The national government sent a committee of scholars and cadres to investigate. The country was just emerging from the violence of its revolutionary land reform, which had enabled the ruling party to gain control of the rural population. But the leadership of the ruling party was in transition and the national government was still in a process of organization. The Institute of Archaeology did not yet exist. The investigating committee made recommendations but exerted no power to resolve matters at either the local or provincial level. Popuoar gold-digging excitement continued into 1958. In 1959, a prominent Chinese archaeologist arrived to supervise archaeological work. Educational campaigns and the training of professional archaeologists began to produce excavation reports. While the looting of ancient brick tombs and other artefacts continues, the Institute of Archaeology, local archaeological societies, museums, and government culture offices at district and provincial levels have endeavored to increase their control over archaeological materials that come to light as a result of construction or other work involving digging into the ground. This presentation will consider the events of 1957-59 in the context of a struggle over possession of debris from the past between villagers who believe they have the right to appropriate wealth found on communal land and government authorities who seek not only to exercise its ownership over the country but also to use the past to invent a history that legitimizes its claim to rule.

His bio can be found at: <https://history.cornell.edu/keith-weller-taylor>

Detail

