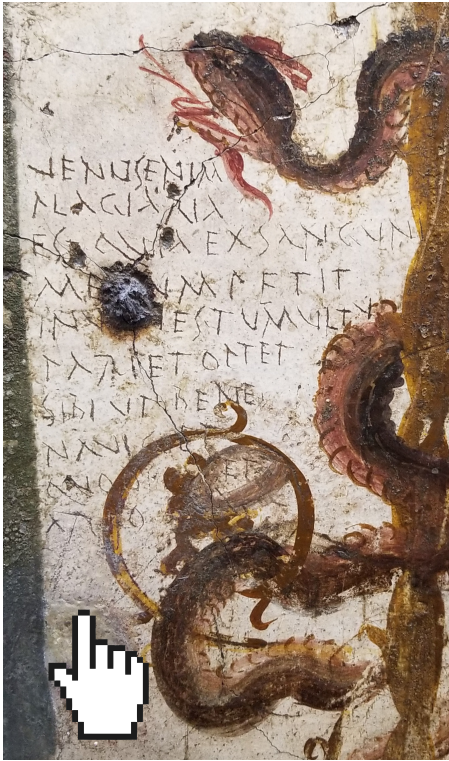


Classical Clickbait: “Pop” Poetry Circulation in Premodern Societies

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This talk will examine inscriptions of poetry on objects and building elements from early Japan, and how these compare against similar inscriptions of poetry from other premodern Eurasian societies. Excavations in recent decades have uncovered inscriptions of poetry from seventh- and eighth-century sites across Japan, many of which are on objects that were broken or thrown away,

as well as on walls and ceilings of surviving structures—what we might call “graffiti.” I propose to explore why the early Japanese created these inscriptions through a comparative approach to similar behavior from China under the Tang Dynasty (618–908 CE) and early imperial Rome (1st century BCE–1st century CE). These societies used similar technologies of and for writing, and evidence of poetry inscribed on objects and structures has been found from sites belonging to each. Looking at how and why members of other, similar societies created “graffiti” can offer parallels to the case in early Japan. In addition, these comparisons let us start to explore how premodern people used informal networks to share their literary voices—behaviors strikingly similar to some of our own today.



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