

The CSUSB Modern China Lecture Series
And The World Affairs Council of Inland Southern California
present:

The Mysteries of Sanxingdui: China's Lost Civilization

Dr. Suzanna Cahill (UC San Diego)

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2PM – 4PM PL-4005

In 1986, Chinese archaeologists working at Sangxingdui (Three Star Mound) in Sichuan province in southwestern China made a dramatic discovery that startled the world and threw the received narrative of Chinese history into great confusion. Nothing like this had ever been seen in China before. The archaeologists excavated two large pits that contained objects including elephant tusks, monumental bronze figures of humans and imaginary creatures, and jade ritual pieces, all dating from the second millennium BC. The pieces and their manner of burial show a highly developed, technologically advanced culture. Prior to their discovery, historians thought that only the simplest Neolithic settlements existed at this time in Sichuan. The current exhibition at the Bowers Museum entitled "China's Lost Civilization: the Mystery of Sangxingdui" displays pieces from this find and a later excavation at Jinsha in 2001. This talk, by the curator of the exhibit, explores many provocative questions raised by these finds, and suggests some of the ways archaeologists and ordinary viewers have tried to answer them. The talk explains how such questions cannot be separated from the current political context of the PRC.

Suzanne Cahill received her PhD from UC Berkeley in Classical Chinese Literature in 1982. Earlier, she served in the Peace Corps in Afghanistan, spent one year at National Taiwan University and two years as a graduate student at Beijing University. She was a research fellow in Chinese Art at the Smithsonian from 1982-83. She has been a member of the faculty of the Department of History at UC San Diego since 1984, teaching courses on early and medieval Chinese history and thought, as well as one women, Daoism, Buddhism, Material Culture, and the Silk Road in Chinese history. She has written four books: *Transcendence and Divine Passion: The Queen Mother of the West in Medieval China* (Stanford, 1993); *Divine Traces of the Daoist Sisterhood (Three Pines, 2006)*; and art catalogues entitled *The Lloyd Cotsen Study Collection of Chinese Bronze Mirrors*

(Costen Occasional Press, Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, 2009) and *Warriors, Tombs and Temples: China's Enduring Legacy* (Bowers Museum, 2011). She has published numerous articles on medieval Chinese history, literature, art, material culture, and religion, translated Chinese texts, and led art and archaeology tours to China. Her current research focuses on clothing and vehicles during the Tang dynasty.

