

# *When History Matters Little:*

Political Hierarchy and Regional Development in China, 1000-2000 AD

*A Lecture with Dr. Ruixue Jia (UC San Diego)*

Thursday, May 23, 2019, 2pm,  
PL-4005, Pfau Library

**Talk Description:** Regime changes in China between AD 1000 and 2000 systematically altered the relative importance of different regions in the political hierarchy of that time. The evolution of Chinese provincial capitals and economic activities during this period throws light on how political factors shape economic geography. Employing a panel dataset across 261 prefectures, we find that while a prefecture definitely benefits from gaining provincial capital status in terms of population density and urbanization, the economic advantage of provincial capital prefectures shrinks greatly after losing capital status — implying that a prestigious past does not always matter for current local development. This finding differs from a large body of literature concerning path dependence. To understand the underlying factors, we document that not only public offices but also important production factors such as human capital and transportation networks alter their geographical location with the change in provincial capital status, which suggests that: 1) We cannot simply consider provincial capitals as consumption-intensive “parasite cities”; and 2) The state can play a critical role in overcoming the inertia in the location of economic activity through providing infrastructure.

**Speaker Bio:** Ruixue Jia is an assistant professor at the School of Global Policy and Strategy, UC San Diego, and an associate fellow at the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research. She is interested in the interplay of economics, history and politics. One stream of her research focuses on understanding elite formation and elite influence, in both historical and modern contexts. She has published research on how open access to elite status matters for political stability. A second stream of her research is on the evolution and impact of social norms – on ethnic choice in China, for example, and on suicide among the elderly in South Korea. A third focus of Jia’s work is the deep historical roots of economic development. She has published research on the long-term impact of the ‘treaty ports’ system and the determinants of peasant rebellion.



Co-Sponsors: CSUSB History Department, Economics Department, History Club/Phi Alpha Theta, the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, the College of Extended and Global Education, the Center for Global Management/College of Business and Public Administration, Pfau Library, and Dr. Margaret Hill and the World Affairs Council of Inland Southern California. Thanks also to Pamela Crosson (History), Cassandra Walls (Faculty Center for Excellence), Alan Llavore (Strategic Communications), and James Trotter (ATI).

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