Abstract  Gender identity was among the most controversial issues of the society and family in Western Han (206 BCE - 8 CE). In one historical episode a husband and a wife were equal, and in another, unequal. This paper argues that the twin tombs of Prince Liu Sheng (d. 113 BCE) and his wife, Dou Wan (d. ca. 109 BCE), comprehensively embody such a complex and nuanced relationship between a couple, both equal and hierarchical. In doing so, in light of contemporary literary accounts, this paper closely compares the architectural designs, types and distributions of burial objects, and body treatments in the tombs. Four major problems are discussed: (1) the different treatments of the male and female bodies emphasize the importance of maintaining gender distinction between the couple; (2) the mutual mirroring between the couple’s funerary architecture and burial objects reflects the notion of equality; (3) the overall hierarchy in material contents between the couple’s tombs demonstrates male superiority; (4) the wife maintains her distinction and power through political symbolism and religious imagery. This paper provides a material perspective on the social history of gender and complicated relationship of husband and wife as envisioned and practiced in Western Han and early imperial China.

About the Speaker  Expecting his PhD at University of Chicago in June 2017, Jie Shi is interested in ancient Chinese intellectual history, particularly in the visual and material perspective, and in the interaction between text and image. He has published over a dozen articles and book chapters, both in English and Chinese, and his most recent works have appeared in such journals as *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, *T'oung Pao*, *Journal of American Oriental Society*, *Early China*, and *Monumenta Serica*. He has just completed a book-length manuscript titled *Modeling Peace: Royal Tombs and Political Wisdom in Early China*. All are welcome!