‘Plan, Manage, Track’
Resource Management in a Sixteenth-Century Porcelain Kiln

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5pm (London time), 17 February, 2021 (Wednesday)
via Zoom (pre-registration required)

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Abstract

We tend to associate the management of (human and material) resources with contemporary processes, and with somewhat off-putting terms like efficiency savings, resource allocation and productivity. This talk will focus on the more mundane aspects of ceramics manufacture in Jingdezhen, based on the Taoshu 陶書, included in the sixteenth-century gazetteer of Jiangxi province. The document is intended to give guidance to those in charge of the kilns, and thus focuses on all aspects of the production that require management, including the safe-guarding of expensive raw materials, oversight of the production costs, including labour and materials, recruitment of skilled workers, and handling storage, packaging and transport. In other words, the ‘plan, manage, track’ terminology used in project management also describes exactly what the overseers in the Jingdezhen kilns were concerned with. The talk will focus on the elements that caused anxieties amongst the managers: securing access to the required materials and managing the skilled labour force, especially in light of pressure on production that came from the demand for goods from the imperial court, and competition with the surrounding kilns that produced for local and global markets.

Speaker Bio