High-fired lime-rich glazes, with maturing temperatures in excess of 1200 °C, begin to appear in China during the Shang dynasty (c. 1700 to 1027 BC) and become more widespread during the subsequent Zhou dynasty (1027 to 221 BC). These glazes differ fundamentally from the relatively low-melting soda-lime-silica glazes of contemporary Egyptian faience and Mesopotamian glazed tiles. The differences in firing temperature and composition underpin the suggestion that the Chinese lime-rich glazes are an independent invention. The reasons for the emergence of lime-rich high-fired glazes during the early Shang dynasty are a matter of ongoing debate. The compositional analysis of archaeological samples of its kind from Deqing (Zhejiang, China) helped us to explore the mechanisms behind the formation of high-fired lime-rich glazes, and the later replication of the glaze-forming process in the lab further tested several possible parameters that would be necessary to control for the early potters when producing these glazes on a regular scale.

Min Yin is currently a completing PhD student doing archaeological science at Institute of Archaeology, UCL. She developed a special interest in Chinese ceramics when she did her undergraduate degrees in China, and her later training in archaeological materials at the University of Nottingham gave her a good platform to combine the art with science. Her current research of the proto-porcelain excavated from Deqing attempts to give people a better understanding of the earliest high-fired glazed ceramics in China under a scientific lens.

Date and Venue: 6:00pm, Thursday October 25 @ Room209, Institute of Archaeology, UCL, and followed by wine reception. All Welcome!