



ROMANS IN VIETNAM

(De)constructing Race and Space through a Transimperial Lens



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Over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, European empires positioned themselves as the supposed heirs of the Roman Empire as they competed for imperial expansion. The French Empire, from the reign of Napoleon I to the Third Republic, was especially notorious for exploiting the cultural capital of classical antiquity to justify its colonial ambitions. Yet, while much research has focused on the influence of the classical tradition in France, little attention has been paid to its effects on the colonies subjugated by France. Focusing specifically on colonial Vietnam, this talk will analyze how the French Empire drew inspiration from the Roman Empire in its urban planning and cultural heritage management. This paper demonstrates that even as colonial policies shifted from an assimilationist to an associationist approach, French urbanization resulted in unofficial racial segregation and the flattening of diverse Southeast Asian cultures into a monolithic "Indochinese" one.

January 28, 2022
4:00pm ET
Zoom

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The UMD Heritage Lectures are supported by the Department of Anthropology and the School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation.



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