Keynote — Rian THUM (Manchester)

Title: China’s Ethnic Exceptions

Abstract:
Marginalised ethnic groups, including today’s “minorities,” are often seen as lying outside of the “mainstream” or “real” China. Their cultures and histories tend to be treated as a niche topics, which add granular detail but are ultimately peripheral to broader understandings of China. Xinjiang today and Tibet in the recent past point to an important exception: moments when outsiders take interest for moral or political reasons. But even these two regions, which comprise roughly 30% of the People’s Republic’s territory, continue to be treated as zones of exception. This lecture will examine how marginalised ethnic groups came to be framed as “minorities” and exceptions, both in Chinese discourses and in foreign scholarship on China. And it will ask what a centering of minoritized groups can add to understandings of China, from the Qing through the present.

Bio: