



**DAAM**  
DIPARTIMENTO ASIA,  
AFRICA E MEDITERRANEO



# Justin Henry

(University of South Florida)



## Echoes of Sri Lanka's 'Lion Rock' The Archaeology and Paleography of Sigiriya

**May 15th, 12:30 pm**

**Venue:** L'Orientale University of Naples  
Palazzo Corigliano, **Antisala degli specchi, 4th floor**

Sigiriya, the 'Lion Rock' of Sri Lanka's north-central dry zone, contains the ruins of an elaborate palace complex constructed in the 5th century, with this structure today prized as a UNESCO World Heritage site and engineering marvel of the ancient world. Legended to have been the defensive fortress-cum-"pleasure palace" of King Kashyapa I, much of Sigiriya's past remains shrouded in mystery. In this talk, Justin Henry reviews the ongoing debate among archaeologists concerning the original purpose of the site, discussing also the unique archive of the "Sigiri graffiti." These poems—impressions of medieval visitors to the site etched onto Sigiriya's "mirror wall"—offer snapshots into the tradition of storytelling surrounding King Kashyapa and his palace, representing some of the earliest attested vernacular poetry in South Asia. The Sigiri Graffiti attest to a robust literary culture among Buddhists of Sri Lanka's medieval period, containing autographs by individuals from across the social landscape of premodern Sri Lanka.