



EARLY CHINA SEMINAR
LECTURE SERIES

Divination and the Body in Ancient China



Constance A. Cook

Lehigh University

Historical Studies, Institute for
Advance Study, Princeton University

Part of a larger book project, which focuses on how the human body is defined through the process of divination, this presentation takes the turtle plastron used in late Shang divination as a proxy body for the king and studies how the plastron functions as both medium and substitute to heal the afflicted king's body. The study also defines the king's "body" as not limited by its skin boundary but in fact symbolically extended to include the Shang state and its inhabitants. Of special interest is the idea that the bodies, both the turtle's and the king's, were permeable and thus were open to the intimate influence of spiritual or cosmic agencies. Within this context, the presentation further explores the practice of exorcism, and how afflicted bodies were healed.

May 4th, 2018 (Friday) 4:30-6:30pm
403 Kent Hall

Seminar Co-Chairs:

Jue Guo, Barnard College, Columbia University

Roderick Campbell, Institute for the Study of Ancient World, New York University

Co-sponsored by The Tang Center for Early China, Department of East Asian
Languages and Cultures, and The Columbia University Seminars, Columbia University.