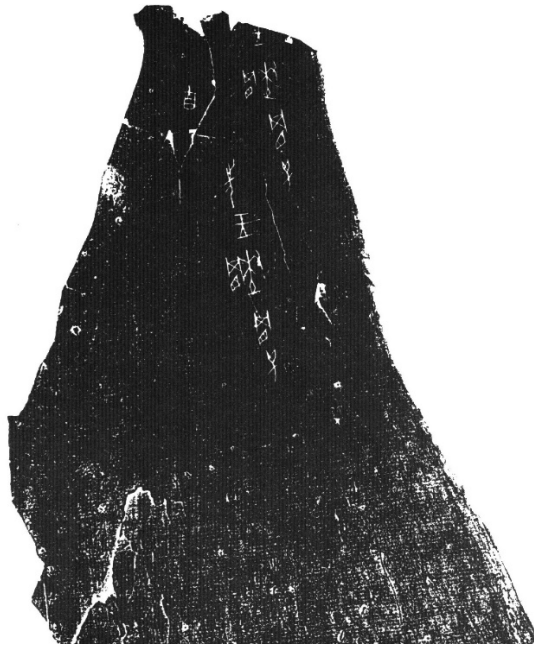




EARLY CHINA SEMINAR
LECTURE SERIES

Hunting and Warfare: History of *Shi* 勢 in Early China

Boqun Zhou · University of Hong Kong



Shi 勢 stands as one of the most pivotal concepts in early Chinese strategic thinking. It encompasses a spectrum of interconnected meanings in Warring States philosophical texts, spanning from “configuration/situation” and “positional advantage” to “power” and ultimately “potential.” Recent advances in paleographic scholarship have unveiled the original meaning of *shi* as “to set up,” as evident in oracle bone and bronze inscriptions. However, the transformation of this simple meaning into its diverse polysemy in Warring States philosophy remains unclear. In this talk, I aim to address this knowledge gap by synthesizing philosophical investigations into *shi*, as undertaken by Roger Ames and François Jullien, with etymological studies of the

term by Qiu Xigui. I argue that early sources often employed *shi* within the context of setting up animal traps, and Warring States military thinkers, inspired by the hunter’s experience and technique, adopted this term to articulate their strategic expertise. This appropriation led to a substantial augmentation of the semantic breadth of *shi*, endowing it with the new meanings enumerated above.

October 20, 2023, 4:30–6:30 pm

Faculty House, 64 Morningside Drive, Columbia University

*Please check the announcement board in the first-floor lobby for room information

Seminar Co-Chairs:

Glenda Chao, Ursinus College

Ethan Harkness, New York University