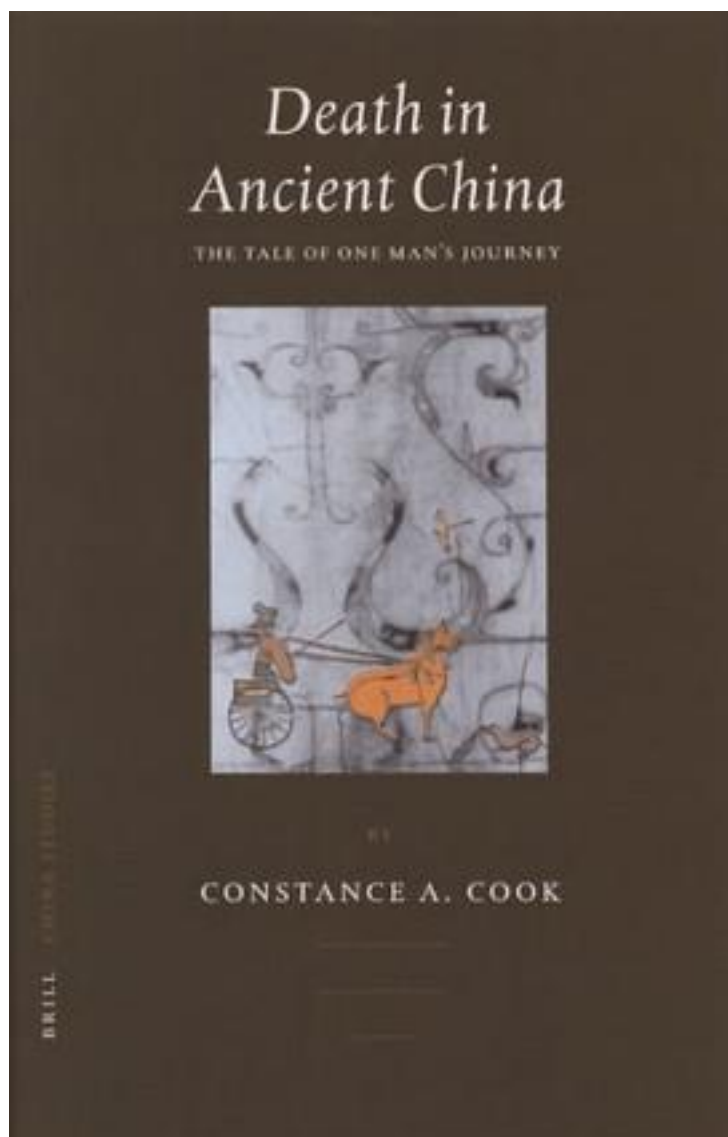


Death in Ancient China



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This richly illustrated book provides a glimpse into the belief system and the material wealth of the social elite in pre-Imperial China through a close analysis of tomb contents and excavated bamboo texts. The point of departure is the textual and material evidence found in one tomb of an elite man buried in 316 BCE near a once wealthy middle Yangzi River valley metropolis. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of cosmological symbolism and the nature of the spirit world. The author shows how illness and death were perceived as steps in a spiritual journey from one realm into another. Transmitted textual records are compared with excavated texts. The layout and contents of this multi-chambered tomb are analyzed as are the contents of two texts, a record of divination and sacrifices performed during the last three years of the occupant's life and a tomb inventory record of mortuary gifts. The texts are fully translated and annotated in the appendices. A first-time close-up view of a set of local beliefs which not only reflect the larger ancient Chinese religious system but also underlay the rich intellectual and artistic life of pre-Imperial China. With first full translations of texts previously unknown to all except a small handful of sinologists."

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目录: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
LIST OF MAPS, FIGURES, AND TABLES
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER TWO DEATH AS JOURNEY IN ANCIENT CHINA
CHAPTER THREE ENTERING THE EARTH
1. SHAO TUO'S BURIAL
1.1. The Inner Coffins
1.2. The Outer Coffin
1.3. The Eastern Compartment
1.4. The Southern Compartment
1.5. The Western Compartment
1.6. The Northern Compartment
2. SACRED SPACE: THE INNER AND OUTER
CHAPTER FOUR SHAO TUO'S DEPARTURE
1. THE DIVINATION TEXT
1.1. Baoshan Terms for Rituals, Offerings, and Spirits
2. THE LACQUER PAINTING
CHAPTER FIVE THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE AFTERLIFE
CHAPTER SIX EPILOGUE
APPENDIX ONE BAOSHAN DIVINATION TEXT
Event I: 318 BCE Early Summer
Event II: 317 BCE Early Spring
Event III: 317 BCE Late Spring
Event IV: 317 BCE Midsummer
Event V: 317 BCE Midwinter
Event VI: 317 BCE Midwinter
Event VII: 316 BCE Early Summer
Event VIII: 316 BCE Early Summer
APPENDIX TWO BAOSHAN INVENTORY TEXT

1. BAMBOO STRIPS 251-277

2. BAMBOO PLAQUE

APPENDIX THREE WANGSHAN TOMB 1 DIVINATION TEXT

BIBLIOGRAPHY

INDEX

• • • • •

([收起](#))

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