



# CENTER on RELIGION and CHINESE SOCIETY

中國宗教與社會研究中心



## **Transmission and Transition:**

**The Incorporation and Transformation of Medieval Chinese Divination in Early Japan**

**Stephan N. Kory**

**Swarthmore College**

**December 2, 2015**

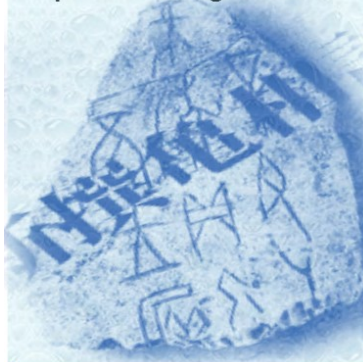
**3:30-5:00 pm**

**Heavilon Hall G17**



This talk reviews received and recovered evidence of divination with bone and fire in early Japan to identify and investigate a shift from deer scapulae to turtle shells that took place during the Nara-Heian transition, particularly within the state cult. It questions why this shift occurred and analyzes a detailed explanation of it found in a purportedly early Heian treatise on the divinatory cracking of turtle plastrons known as the *Shinsen kisōki* 新撰龜相記 (Newly compiled record of turtle omens). The *Shinsen kisōki* claims to have been authored by a group of men descended from a common genealogical line of ancestral kami associated with divination. It not only reveals much about why members of a handful of related clans would have promoted a change from scapulimancy to plastronomy at this point in history, but also much about how the state ritualization of the latter affected, and was effected by, other changes in state and local religion and politics during the late Nara and early Heian periods.

Stephan N. Kory has a Ph.D. in Chinese from Indiana University (IU) Bloomington, an M.A. in Chinese from the University of Colorado Boulder, and a B.A. in East Asian Studies from Washington and Lee University. He has just completed a two-year position as Visiting Assistant Professor in Religion and Chinese Humanities at Reed College, and has also held teaching positions at IU and at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. He holds a fellowship with the International Consortium for Research in the Humanities (IKGF) at the Friedrich-Alexander University in Erlangen, Germany and will soon begin a position as Visiting Assistant Professor of Chinese at Swarthmore College. Much of his current research focuses on the history and development of mantic practitioners and practices in Han and medieval China.



Center on  
Religion and  
Chinese Society  
中國宗教與社會研究中心

[www.purdue.edu/crcs](http://www.purdue.edu/crcs)  
765-494-5801