



Marta Hanson, PhD
Short Academic Biography
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“Grasping Heaven and Earth’ (*Qian Kun zai wo* 乾坤在握):
The Mind in Hand in Chinese Medicine”

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Art of Diagram
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Shifting focus from the patient’s body to the healer’s body, *Grasping Heaven and Earth* demonstrates how Chinese physicians instrumentalized their hands to measure, diagnose, memorize, calculate, prognosticate, and make clinical decisions. They corporeally as well as conceptually grasped celestial and terrestrial processes integral to medicine. Physicians used their hands to memorize concepts related to clinical practice, calculate within specific temporal parameters to make prognostications, and carry out ritual gestures intended to reduce risk, improve fortune, and even cure. They thereby instrumentalized their hands to extend memory, calculate fate, and secure ritual efficacy. This lecture has three parts: “Divination and Revelation” introduces when I was first introduced to Chinese divination practices, “Arts of Memory” explains how I first framed the related Chinese medical hand mnemonics, and “Body as Technology” addresses how I have since expanded upon that original frame. During this lecture I will ask the audience to physically participate in two ways: stand up to do an exercise using one’s body to memorize the order of the 12 western zodiac signs; and carry out a divination on one’s hand using a Chinese strategy that goes back to at least the late 15th century. In the process, I will survey a range of Chinese examples of the “mind in hand” from earliest evidence in the 7th century to the 18th century and make some comparisons with examples from medieval and early modern Europe.

Marta Hanson is an independent scholar who publishes about the history of medicine in China, public health in East Asia, and early modern Sino-European medical exchanges. Her book is *Speaking of Epidemics in Chinese Medicine: Disease and the Geographic Imagination in Late Imperial China* (Routledge, 2011). She was Assistant Professor of late imperial Chinese history at the University of California, San Diego (1997-2004) and then Associate Professor of East Asian medical history in the History of Medicine Department, Johns Hopkins University (2004-2021). She is currently a visiting scholar at Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte in Berlin. There she is working on a book manuscript, *Grasping Heaven and Earth: The Mind in Hand in Chinese Medicine*, about how healers and diviners used their hands to think with, divine, and heal.

Within cross-cultural medical history, she has an on-going scholarly collaboration with Gianna Pomata (early modern European historian) on 17th- to 18th-century translations of Chinese medical texts into European languages. This has resulted in several publications related to the *Specimen Medicinæ Sinicæ* (1682), the first translation into Latin of Chinese medical texts. Related to contemporary issues, she has written about Chinese medical responses to SARS, what COVID19 has revealed about US-China differences, and cultural patterns of responses to pandemics.

She was senior co-editor of the journal *Asian Medicine: Tradition and Modernity* (2011-2016), President of the International Society for the History of East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine (ISHEASTM, 2015-2019), and is currently on the editorial boards of *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine*, *East Asian Science, Technology, and Society*, *Asian Medicine*, *Chinese Medicine and Culture*, and the *Asian Journal of Medical Humanities*.