



University of  
Zurich<sup>UZH</sup>

Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies – Chinese Studies  
University Research Priority Program (URPP) Asia and Europe



# From Here to Eternity A Sino-Jewish Encounter

Friday, May 15, 2015, 18:00–20:00

University of Zurich, Room ZUB 416, Zürichbergstrasse 32, 8032 Zurich

**Guest Lecture**

**Prof. Dr. Haiyan Lee, Stanford University**

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, tens of thousands of European Jews fleeing Nazi genocide found a temporary safe-haven in Shanghai. They were able to do so crucially because Shanghai was an open city under divided governance and because China was at war with Japan and could not exercise sovereign control over its borders. In this talk, I ponder the moral lessons from this fortuitous episode of humanitarianism through the lens of moral philosophy and moral psychology. Using the Canadian-Chinese writer Bella's novel *A Jewish Piano* as my textual anchor, I ask what it takes to overcome what Zygmunt Bauman calls

“adiaphorization,” or the abeyance of individual moral agency, that pervades the modern condition. I also compare the Jewish refugee experience in China with the divergent fates of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Chinese immigrants in Southeast Asia and the United States, in order to highlight the moral challenge peculiar to the age of nationalism and the nation-state system.

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