

Other Epistemologies Online Lecture Series

Semester Focus: "Other" Forms of Worship: Religion and Popular Culture



Uncovering Lesser-Known Regional Groups Pertaining to Traditional Chinese Theatre

14:00-16:00 (CEST) / 13:00-15:00 (GMT) / 21:00-23:00 (GMT+8), Thursday, December 22, 2022

The lecture will take place via Zoom. Please register here: <https://www.aoi.uzh.ch/registration>

Online Lecture by Dr. Caroline Chia, National University of Singapore

In the field of Chinese studies, we learn mostly from classical and vernacular Chinese texts that inform us about different disciplines including history, literature, society, economy, and politics related to the Chinese. While this may form the mainstream discourse, the speaker's research and teaching focus more on lesser-known communities residing outside China, who constitute a significant part of the society but are often underrepresented. In her view, the terms "Sinophone" and "Sinosphere" challenge our common understanding of "Chinese", especially in sites where the mainstream language was/is not limited to Mandarin, or where cultural and linguistic syncretism had already taken place. Hence, the concept of the Sinophone/Sinosphere will be discussed in relation to the various communities whom the speaker has observed in her study of traditional Chinese theatre. While opera performers/puppeteers are the main subjects in theatre, they often play multiple roles—community stakeholders, religious/ritual specialists, proprietors, middlemen and so forth. Throughout this study, themes that are seemingly contrasting but interrelated—tradition/modernity, orality/literacy, religious/secular, local/regional/transnational—are useful points of connection in understanding the complex narratives gathered from the study of these communities.

Dr. Caroline Chia is currently a Research Fellow at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. Prior to joining NUS, she taught courses on Chinese classics and literature at the University of Melbourne and Nanyang Technological University (Singapore). Caroline believes that academic teaching and research should inculcate skill sets relevant to undergraduates and graduates when they join the workforce. Her research focuses mostly on lesser-known communities pertaining to traditional Chinese theatre, particularly customs that used to be a significant part of the social lives of the people but have gradually faded due to urbanisation and secularisation. Various efforts have also been made by Caroline to reconnect these traditions with the younger generation.

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