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Western Categories, Knowledge Building, and the Scientific Value of Sinological Discourse

Grégoire Espeset

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Institute of East Asian Studies

April 4, 2024

Colloquium: Western Categories, Knowledge Building, and the Scientific Value of Sinological Discourse

4 - 5:30 p.m.

3401 Dwinelle Hall



Grégoire Espeset

How do European-language scholars with a Western cultural background perceive, understand and describe the human phenomena they observe in East Asia? How does their mind process written or spoken information conveyed in foreign script and languages? This lecture will discuss the cognitive and epistemological relationship existing between Sinology and source-language data from several complementary perspectives, including the role of metalanguage and culturally predetermined categories in the generation of learned discourse, the formation of terminologies, the coinage of neologisms, the epistemic value of the information produced, and the conditions of its reception by neighbouring disciplines in the humanities and by the educated public.

Grégoire Espeset is associate member of the Groupe Sociétés Religions Laïcités (GSRL) in Paris, France, and a research partner of the International Consortium for Research in the Humanities (IKGF) in Erlangen, Germany. A historian and a philologist, he has conducted research at the Academia Sinica and the Centre for Chinese Studies in Taiwan; the Institute for Research in Humanities, Kyoto University, Japan; German federally-sponsored international centres hosted by the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg and the Ruhr University Bochum; the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) and Université de Paris in France. He has taught the history of Taoism and Chinese religions at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE) in Paris (2008-2010). His current research focuses on intellectual and literary production in imperial China from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages, with a special focus on remnants of the “Weft” or “Confucian Apocrypha”; the comparative epistemology of premodern China and the modern West; and contemporary scholarly discourse in European languages on history, knowledge and religion in East Asia.

Contact Info:

ccs@berkeley.edu