



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE FOR CHINESE STUDIES

ICS presents the "China and the International Mediasphere" Lecture Series

Regional Theater in the Age of Nationalism: Cantonese Opera and the Mei-Ou Challenge in Republican China



Friday, March 11, 2016

4:00-5:30 pm

Hagerty Hall 062

1775 College Road

Professor Wing Chung Ng

Department of History

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Abstract: Cantonese opera took shape as a distinct art form and a theatrical genre of considerable local appeal in Southern Guangdong in the early 20th century. Such theatrical formation unfolded in the context of rising nationalism that questioned the legitimacy and viability of regional operas. Especially during Mei Lanfang's performance tours to Hong Kong and Guangzhou in the 1920s and the ensuing tenure of Ouyang Yuqian as head of the Guangdong Theater Research Institute (1928-31), the pressure was unrelenting for Cantonese opera to defend and redefine itself as more than an emblem of regional identity and a vehicle of dialect-based popular culture. How did Cantonese opera step up to the challenge and with what sort of outcomes by the eve of the Pacific War? The talk will conclude with some preliminary observations on the more recent cultural shifts and re-imagining of Cantonese opera in the different context of late colonial and post-colonial Hong Kong.

Bio: Wing Chung Ng is a historian of modern China at the University of Texas at San Antonio. His two principal areas of research pertain to the Chinese diaspora and the social history of regional operas in South China. He is the author of *The Chinese in Vancouver, 1945-80: The Pursuit of Identity and Power* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999) and *The Rise of Cantonese Opera* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press and Hong Kong: HKU Press, 2015). He was a Commonwealth Scholar, a National Endowment for the Humanities fellow, a resident fellow at the National Humanities Center, and, most recently, a Fulbright Scholar. Among his current projects is a longitudinal study of Chinese migration history over the last four hundred years; he is also interested in exploring the re-imagining of Cantonese opera as a cultural heritage and a subject of academic research in late colonial and postcolonial Hong Kong.

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