The Politics of Greek Meter in Modern Asia

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Friday, November 17, 2017 - 3:30pm

PCAR 395

This paper explores debates over the translation and social meanings of ancient Greek and quantitative meter in two twentieth century Asian contexts: first, the cosmopolitan Indian ashram of Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), a Cambridge-educated Classicist who became a revolutionary for Indian self-rule and a modern guru; and second, the writings of Zhou Zuoren (1885-1967), Luo Niansheng (1904-1990) and others who pioneered the translation of Greek and Sanskrit poetry directly into modern Chinese. Approached as part of classical reception history, the politics of quantitative and tonal prosody helps to clarify some of the distinct ways in which ancient Greece, India, and China were reconceived in comparative terms.