

2020-21 School of Chinese Seminar

**Empire, Extraction, and Untranslatability: Mahua Literature
and Southeast Asian Chinese Perspectives**

帝國、資源開採與不可譯性：馬華文學與東南亞華人的視角

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**Venue 地點: Room730, Run Run Shaw Tower, Centennial Campus &
via Zoom**

Language 演講語言: English 英文

<https://hku.zoom.us/j/97429406058?pwd=SDZuUTdncXkyVjJCC1FiYzhuZmdFZz09>

Zoom Meeting ID: 974 2940 6058

Password: 148774

Abstract:

This talk approaches the formation of Mahua (or Chinese-Malayan), and more broadly, Southeast Asian Chinese literary subjectivity as a dance between claims of their “untranslatable singularity” and their multifaceted history of translation projects. So, rather than view Mahua literature as either a local-oriented or a diasporic minor literature written in Chinese in present-day Malaysia, I propose a new framework that views translation and notions of untranslatability as a main theme of Mahua literature’s development from colony to nation. Here, untranslatability is connected to the idea of “native language,” the very thing that Mahua literature has struggled to define, in light of other forms of untranslatability that Mahua literature has to contend with, such as imperial sovereignty over religious meaning, or the totality of horror of certain migrant experiences. Using sources such as novels, short stories, and diaries, and relating them to examples of translation projects by colonial offices intended for governance, I locate Mahua literature’s formation within specific state and market conditions of empire and extraction in Southeast Asia, as well as juridical-religious transformations in Malaya’s multilingual, multicultural society.

本演講探討馬華（即華裔馬來亞）文學主體性乃至東南亞華文文學主體性的形成，並將此類建構視為一場觀念及其相關實踐兩者之間的拉鋸。具體而言，在建構的過程中，一方面是馬華文學“不可譯之獨特性”的主張，另一方面則是其翻譯實踐的多維度歷史。因此，與其把馬華文學歸類為當前馬來西亞用華文書寫、具備在地化與離散特質的小文學，本人提出一個新的框架，將翻譯和不可譯性的觀念視為馬華文學歷經從殖民地到新興國家演變的主要議題。在此，不可譯性連結“母語”的概念，而馬華文學一直難以定義後者，卻也同時必須應對其他形式的不可譯性，例如帝國主權所設定的宗教意義或充斥某些移民經驗的恐懼。本人采用各式小說和日記等材料，追蹤它們與殖民地政府旨在進行治理的翻譯項目的關係，從而為馬華文學的形成重新定位。這支東南亞華文文學的緣起同帝國的建立及其在區域內的資源開採密切關聯，涉及的亦是在特定國家和市場條件下，馬來亞多元語言、多元文化的社會中司法與宗教的變革。

Bio:

Nicholas Y. H. Wong (Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Chicago) is a postdoctoral fellow in the Society of Fellows in the Humanities at the University of Hong Kong. His research focuses on media and modernity in China and Southeast Asia, resource extraction literary politics, Chinese-English translation, transnationalism and diaspora, poetry and poetics. His book project, titled *Resource Extraction and Decolonial Literary-Intellectual Chinese Thought from the Malay Peninsula*, is a materialist and geoeconomic history of Mahua literature and intellectual culture. His articles and translations have appeared or are forthcoming in *CLEAR (Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews)*, *Chapters on Asia*, *Renditions*, and *PRISM*.

王學權，美國芝加哥大學比較文學博士。現於香港大學人文榮譽學會（**Society of Fellows in the Humanities**）擔任博士後研究員，主要研究方向為中國和東南亞的媒體和現代性、資源開採的文學政治、中英翻譯、跨國主義和離散、以及詩歌與詩學。目前正在撰寫專著《馬來半島的資源開採與去殖民化的華文文學與思想》，檢視馬華文學與思想文化的物質與地緣經濟史。論文和譯作曾在或即將在 **CLEAR (Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews)**、**Chapters on Asia**、《譯叢》和 **PRISM** 等期刊或論文集裡發表。

ALL are welcome