Look, Smell, Listen: Perceptual Mapping in Erlang Plays
Professor Stephen H. West

Date and Time: December 10, 2014 (Wednesday); 4:00-6:00pm
Venue: CPD-LG34, Centennial Campus, HKU
Moderator: Professor Shu-mei Shih (HKU)

Abstract: This paper investigates a Ming court play, The Divinity Erláng Locks Away the Great Sage Equal to Heaven (二郎神鎖齊天大聖), and explores how sensations of sound, smell, and sight define natural communities of demons that are place specific, and how these same perceptual sensations signal the crossing of boundaries that are meant to segregate demons and grant them territorial autonomy. The processes of quelling of these aggressive demons have a historical lineage in folk myth and local cults, and the plays reflect the ways in which the Chinese state controlled local cults by incorporating them into state-sanctioned religious ritual, and appropriating their local power for state interests.

Professor Stephen H. West Foundation Professor of Chinese at Arizona State University and former head of the Chinese department there, is one of the most renowned scholars of premodern Chinese literature. Before joining Arizona State University, Professor West was the Louis Agassiz Professor of Chinese at the University of California, Berkeley, where he also served as Executive Director of the Inter-University Board of Chinese Language Studies. His many books include Vaudeville and Narrative: Aspects of Chin Theater, Chinese Theater 1100-1450: A Source Book, and The Moon and the Zither: Wang Shifu's Story of the Western Wing, among others.

All are welcome