

Laboratoire SPHere UMR 7219 | Centre CHPSAA

## **Séminaire du Centre pour une Histoire de la Philosophie et des Sciences vue d'Asie, d'Afrique, etc**

Seminar of the Centre for the History of Philosophy and Science seen from Asia, Africa, and so on (CHPSAA)

2022 – 2023

Les séances auront lieu en anglais et en mode hybride ; nous nous réunirons les vendredis, sauf exception, de 14 à 16h, en salle Rothko, 412B, à l'Université Paris Cité, bâtiment Condorcet, 4, rue Elsa Morante.

Organisation : Florence Bretelle-Establet, Agathe Keller, Eleonora Sammarchi et les membres du Centre

**mardi 22 novembre**, 14:00 - 17:00, salle Gris, 734A

: : Historiographie de l'astronomie

Organisation : Karine Chemla

Giorgio MATTEOLI (Université de Turin) : *Historia ancilla astronomiae Joseph-Nicolas Delisle's (1688-1768) European Network and the First General History of Astronomy*

Dimitri BAYUK (SPHere) : *Astronomy and Diplomacy on the Sino-Russian Border and around : in 3 Episodes with a Prologue*

**vendredi 9 décembre**, 15:00 - 18:00, salle Rothko, 412B

: : Hommage à Rosane Rocher

Organisation : M. Menon, A. Keller and K. Chemla

15:00 - 15:30

Agathe KELLER (CNRS, SPHere) : *An intellectual biography of Rosane Rocher*

15:30 - 16:00

Minakshi MENON (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin) : *Rosane Rocher and Histories of Science in South Asia*

16:00 - 16:30

Joshuah ELRICH (University of Macau) : *The Career of Mootiah Teroovercadoo, an Eighteenth-Century Mudaliar Scholar in British Employ*

16:30 - 16:45

pause

16:45 - 17:15

Richard LARIVIERE (Professor Emeritus, University of Texas at Austin and President Emeritus, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago) : *Actors in the Colonial Enterprise*

17:15 - 18:00 Discussion générale

**vendredi 13 janvier 2023**

: : Towards a critical reflection on the uses of the notion of civilization in the history of philosophy and the history of science

Organisation : K. Chemla

Tristan MAUFFREY (MCF en littérature comparée à l'Université Sorbonne Nouvelle/ CERC) : *Pensée civilisationnelle et comparatisme asymétrique : autour de « l'âge axial » et de ses enjeux épistémologiques*

Florence DUPONT (Professeur émérite, Université Paris Cité) : *Transferts culturels, mutations et ethnogenèse : la notion de civilisation en question dans l'Antiquité*

**vendredi 17 février, 14:00 - 17:00**

: : Categories with which historians and philosophers of science work : Geographies

Organisation : E. Sammarchi

Thomas HADDAD (University of São Paulo) : *Seen from Latin America : The West, the Rest, or Somewhere Else*

Eléonora SAMMARCHI (ETH-ZÜRICH, & SPHERE) : *Mediterranean world(s) as a category of historical analysis. Focus on medieval and early modern mathematics*

**vendredi 17 mars, 14:00 - 16:00**

: : Réflexions critiques sur la notion de globalisation en histoire et philosophie des sciences

Organisation : Agathe Keller (CNRS, SPHere)

Eric GUREVITCH

**vendredi 7 avril, 14:00 - 17:00, exceptionnellement en salle Malevitch, 483A**

: : Professionalisation in scholarly fields in a wider perspective

Organisation : Florence Bretelle-Establet (CNRS, SPHere)

J. CORBI

**vendredi 26 mai**

: : Categories with which historians and philosophers of science work : Periodisations

Organisation : K. Chemla (CNRS, SPHere)

**vendredi 16 juin**

Organisation : Justin E. H. Smith (Université Paris Cité, HPS, SPHere)

Eyob DERILLO (The British Library)

Programme de l'année prochaine

**Vers les résumés >>**

**Informations pratiques**

**SPHere**

Bâtiment Condorcet, Université Paris Cité, campus Diderot,  
4, rue Elsa Morante, 75013 - Paris. Plan.

## Résumés

**mardi 22 novembre, 14:00 - 17:00**

: : Historiographie de l'astronomie

Giorgio MATTEOLI (Université de Turin): *Historia ancilla astronomiae Joseph-Nicolas Delisle's (1688-1768) European Network and the First General History of Astronomy*

During the 18th century, the historiography of the sciences showed a tremendous increase in output, overall quality and scope in treating the past of each discipline and (for the first time) of science in general from a systematic point of view. Since history of science was not yet conceived as a clearly defined discipline in itself, nor was it attached to any university curriculum whatsoever, the styles and aims of historiographical practices were still mostly linked in a close way to those of current scientific projects, and sometimes to the institutions that fostered them. The Parisian Royal Academy of Sciences stood out as the most active among them, due to its hegemonic stance at the time to be sure, but also to the large-scale collaborative networks that some of its members were able to put in place. This presentation will explore the origin and fortune of the project of composing a general history of astronomy conceived by one of its most active members, the astronomer and geographer Joseph-Nicolas Delisle. As recent archival research has shown, this project was at first sketched in the wake of Giovanni Domenico Cassini's influence, and later put on a new footing and animated by Delisle (who was one Cassini's last assistants). Delisle soon started involving in more or less direct way many scholars from all over Europe, who helped gathering the bibliographical information needed and, sometimes, even to carry out some of its parts, as it will be shown by exploring the case of the intense correspondence he maintained with German scholars in Wittenberg, namely Johann Friedrich Weidler and Georg Matthias Böse. Even though Delisle's general history of astronomy was left unaccomplished when he died in 1768, it was later to be taken up by Delisle's pupil, Jérôme Lalande, and eventually completed by the pupil of the latter, Jean-Baptiste Joseph Delambre.

Dimitri BAYUK (SPHere): *Astronomy and Diplomacy on the Sino-Russian Border and around: in 3 Episodes with a Prologue*

The studies of Chinese astronomy in Russia have a long and complex history, and I will focus only on three episodes of particular interest. In the prologue, I describe how the attention to the movements of celestial bodies was motivated by orders of the authorities and the needs of navigation.

The first astronomical courses started being taught at the Navigational School, founded in Moscow in 1701. As its name suggests, the program of the school included orientation at sea and charting, but it also had a purely terrestrial context, linked to the needs of the border demarcation where the emerging Russian Empire had to face the Chinese Qing Empire. A series of armed conflicts on the Amur River in the 17th century led to the signing of the Nerchinsk Treaty between Russia, Muscovy Tsardom at the time, and China in 1689. A subsidiary result of the summit also was the intention to establish relationships with astronomers from Catholic missions in Beijing.

The second episode relates to the first half of the 19th century, the heyday of the Russian Orthodox mission in Beijing. For a long time, the members of the mission paid virtually no attention to the natural sciences as such or their influence on Chinese culture. The situation began to change only under Iakinf Bichurin, and the interest climaxed when Konstantin Skachkov began working in Beijing. Both of them turned their attention not so much to the astronomical observations made in China by foreign astronomers, but to the ability of the Chinese themselves to make such observations. Bichurin and Skachkov discovered a whole stratum of ancient astronomical and cosmological beliefs that had developed long before the first Europeans arrived in China. Still, they followed opposite approaches to the ancient legacy. Nevertheless, their interest undoubtedly heralded both the advent of the era of Russian Orientalism and the turn of Russian public consciousness toward the philosophy of cosmology. Some results of their works contributed to efforts of Russian diplomacy in negotiating with China and territorial acquisitions in the late 19th century.

The third episode centers on a brief renaissance of Sino-Russian relations after the end of WWII. At this time, quite a few Chinese students manage to come to study in cities of the Soviet Union, and scientists of the USSR Academy of Sciences began closely to cooperate with their colleagues from the PRC. This provides an opportunity to become acquainted with sources that could not be accessed before due to both their rarity and linguistic complexity. This episode was short-lived : the Soviet-Chinese friendship was replaced by disagreements and the need to return to the issues of cross-border demarcation. The disagreements led again to armed clashes on the Amur River and, paradoxically, to a new wave of scholarly attention to the history of Chinese astronomy.

**vendredi 9 décembre, 15:00 - 18:00**

: : Hommage à Rosane Rocher

Agathe KELLER (CNRS, SPHere) : *An intellectual biography of Rosane Rocher*

Rosane Rocher's work is especially remembered for her biographies of early indologists and of some of the pandits they employed. Reflecting on her intellectual itinerary, I would like to link these works with others she has carried out through out her career, from Belgium to the University of Pennsylvania, drawing thus a portrait of a woman indologist in academia in the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century.

Minakshi MENON (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin) : *Rosane Rocher and Histories of Science in South Asia*

Historians of science have responded to the challenge of writing histories of science in the "non-west" by using the concept of the "broker" in order to analyse cross-cultural knowledge flows. The broker or go-between has been used as a capacious category to accommodate translators, spies, healers, and interestingly, pandits in the service of the English East India Company. Such histories, though, rely almost entirely on European-language sources. Rosane Rocher's biographies of pandits, which draw on their own works in Sanskrit, act as a corrective, allowing us to recover histories of actors embedded in complex social relationships, responding to rapid changes in their social and material conditions. The new turn to writing decolonial histories of science in South Asia, I argue, would be difficult in the absence of Rocher's work.

Joshuah ELRICH (University of Macau) : *The Career of Mootiah Teroovercadoo, an Eighteenth-Century Mudaliar Scholar in British Employ*

This paper takes its inspiration from Rosane Rocher's landmark study of Radhakanta Tarkavagisa. In similar fashion, it examines the career of Mootiah Teroovercadoo (Muttiah Thiruverkadu), another Indian scholar who collaborated with the Company. It compares the experiences of the two men, drawing a contrast between patterns of scholarly patronage in the south and in the north. It finds that in the growing Madras Presidency, as early as the 1790s, the East India Company sought to recruit scholar-collaborators from non-elite social groups. Mootiah, a Mudaliar and Shaivite, was different in many ways from the venerable pandit Radhakanta. But he too encountered both opportunities and dangers in his novel relationship with the Company.

Richard LARIVIERE (Professor Emeritus, University of Texas at Austin and President Emeritus, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago) : *Actors in the Colonial Enterprise*

The term "colonialism" has taken on such power that it has now slipped into the category of broad-brush terms such as fascism or socialism : terms that are both short-hand for specific phenomena and terms of abuse in the political arena. In the latter case, the terms have become nearly meaningless. Rosane Rocher's work is an important grounding for scholars because it shows us how individual acts and careers shaped the colonialism of the 18th and 19th century. We come to know through her work human specifics of the colonial enterprise. Such specific accounts of the work of scholars of this period can lead to important introspection for our own work as scholars.

**vendredi 13 janvier, 14:00 - 17:00**

: : Vers une réflexion critique de l'usage de la notion de civilisation en histoire de la philosophie et en histoire des sciences

Les publications d'histoire des sciences anciennes font régulièrement appel à la notion pour le moins floue et connotée de « civilisation ». Quelles sont les hypothèses implicites qui accompagnent le recours à cette notion ? Comment peut-on saisir les traits que les auteurs prêtent à des entités de ce type et les causalités qu'ils lui associent ? Quels problèmes scientifiques ces emplois soulèvent-ils ? Nous amorcerons cette réflexion, qui a vocation à s'étaler sur plusieurs années, par deux exposés d'hellénistes qui ont déjà creusé ces problématiques. Leurs présentations se feront en français avec des diapositives en anglais.

Tristan MAUFFREY (Mcf en littérature comparée à l'Université Sorbonne Nouvelle/ CERC) : *Pensée civilisationnelle et comparatisme asymétrique : autour de « l'âge axial » et de ses enjeux épistémologiques*

Pour rendre comparables entre elles les cultures anciennes à l'échelle globale, bien des discours savants euro-péocentrés ont, depuis le XVIIIe siècle, projeté sur le passé du reste du monde la catégorie d'Antiquité, en associant implicitement à ce terme un ensemble de représentations des cultures grecque et romaine dont l'Europe revendiquait l'héritage. Créer des effets de synchronisme entre l'aire méditerranéenne et, par exemple, le monde perse, indien ou chinois, permettait de penser une histoire de l'humanité élargie, mais aussi, paradoxalement, de perpétuer un schéma civilisationnel selon lequel les manifestations du génie humain (sous la forme de découvertes intellectuelles, d'innovations technologiques, ou encore de textes canoniques) seraient présentes en même temps dans certaines parties du monde plus que dans d'autres. Cela revenait donc à créer des comparaisons

asymétriques entre cultures anciennes essentialisées, en fonction de leur mode d'inscription dans une supposée temporalité commune. La théorie de « l'âge axial » (Achsenzeit) formulée par Karl Jaspers en 1949 s'inscrit pleinement dans cette pensée civilisationnelle, en postulant la concomitance de l'apparition de nouveaux modes de pensée rationnels et spirituels dans différentes « grandes civilisations » entre le VIII<sup>e</sup> et le II<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-C. Or cette théorie influente sous-tend encore parfois, à travers de multiples reformulations critiques, de fécondes entreprises comparatistes. On en discutera ici quelques enjeux épistémologiques, notamment dans le champ des études sino-helléniques, en montrant qu'ils font écho à des débats politiques et idéologiques très actuels.

Florence DUPONT (Professeur émérite, Université Paris Cité) : *Transferts culturels, mutations et ethnogenèse : la notion de civilisation en question dans l'Antiquité*

La civilisation romaine, la civilisation grecque sont des catégories floues qu'on utilise parce qu'elles ont une histoire dans les traditions savantes de l'Europe, mais qui deviennent toxiques dès qu'elles servent à définir ce qui serait le noyau culturel, originel, d'une communauté politique ou sociale. Ce que l'historien rencontre ce sont des peuples ou des cités qui, selon les circonstances, affichent leur rattachement à une culture prestigieuse (la culture littéraire grecque à partir du 4<sup>ème</sup> s av JC) ou hégémonique (Rome en Italie à partir du 3<sup>ème</sup> s av JC), en particulier par des transferts culturels; ou au contraire affirment une différence, ou une identité nouvelle, construites, ce qu'on appelle une ethnogenèse.

Ces ethnogenèses ne sont pas des évolutions immanentes et téléologiques, mais des mutations volontaires. J'utiliserai trois exemples : Paestum, Messine et Rome.

**vendredi 13 janvier, 14:00 - 17:00**

: : Categories with which historians and philosophers of science work : Geographies

Organisation : E. Sammarchi

Thomas HADDAD (University of São Paulo) : *Seen from Latin America : The West, the Rest, or Somewhere Else*

For more than two centuries (and counting), Latin American intellectuals have been obsessing with one question: what is the defining element of the region's identity, the key that will unlock the door to understanding our entire past, present, and future? Are we tropicalized Europeans, hybrids, originals, post-colonials, neo-colonials, decolonials, Global Southerners, anti-moderns, hyper-moderns...? What unifies such disparate standpoints is a permanent uneasiness with the "West" as idea or reality (ever-present for Latin Americans in the powerful metonym that is the USA) : are we Western enough ? Do we want to be? Is there a Latin American "we," anyway? As I argue in this talk, the history of science in Latin America has always been part and parcel of this troubled quest for an identity borne out of a geography — here understood both as an analytical category (as in what is specifically Latin American about Latin American science) and a lived experience (as in what it means to do history of science from Latin America). To make this argument, I will revisit some influential claims that have been made about the history of science in the region, such as that it was a natural, unproblematic extension of European science ; a violent imposition that erased Indigenous knowledge systems ; a history of creative reception and adaptation ; a paradigmatic example of colonial and imperial science ; a series of false starts and unfulfilled promises ; a chapter in the global history of science. My intention is to demonstrate that these views ultimately encode entire historiographical, political, and, dare I say, existential attitudes toward the lingering question of Latin America's place — or lack thereof — in the metageography of the West and the Rest.

Eleonora SAMMARCHI (ETH-Zürich, & SPHere) : *Mediterranean world(s) as a category of historical analysis.*

*Focus on medieval and early modern mathematics*

Within the study of the history of science and philosophy, geographies correspond to a category of analysis that, just like periodizations and disciplines, has been questioned and reinterpreted in different – sometimes opposite – ways. The Mediterranean world is a paradigmatic example of this situation. Besides the geographical indication limited to the regions surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, scholarship has shown that it is possible to identify several Mediterraneans, and that this term can be applied in a broader sense, according to multilinear trajectories of the circulation of knowledge. In this talk, I will present different ways of identifying the Mediterranean area, and of justifying its borders : from the appropriations of this spatial concept by historians with their own political agenda, to its investigation according to categories that are typical of global and post-colonial histories. Additionally, I will focus on medieval and early modern algebra, and I will show that algebraic texts represent a perfect case study whereby one can identify what I propose to call Mediterranean Mathematics. The delimitation of this spatial concept relies on the recognition of the arbitrariness of the concept of the "border", and is the product of actors themselves and of the circulation of their texts

