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KYOTO LECTURES

Tuesday, September 26th, 18:00h

Damien Kunik SPEAKER

On French and Japanese Anthropologies André Leroi-Gourhan in Kyoto (1937-1939)

André Leroi-Gourhan (1911-1986)—considered today along with Claude Lévi-Strauss as one of the major French anthropologists of the 20th century—was the first French scholar to be sent to Japan on an official fellowship in 1937. This talk will focus on this two-year ethnographic mission in Kyoto.

Despite scholarship on the history of Japanese academic fields always considering anthropology as a Western importation to Japan, Western “purveyors of anthropology” have gladly conceded that they were strongly impressed, if not influenced, by their Japanese colleagues. As I will show through the case of Leroi-Gourhan’s mission, ethnography, anthropology, and folklore studies were actually much better understood in Japan than they were in France in the 1930’s. This leads us to reassess the claimed influence of Western academic thought on Japan and to examine the very real influence of Japan on Western anthropology.

Damien Kunik is a research associate at the University of Geneva. Since 2016, he has also been a postdoctoral visiting researcher at the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka. His current research topics include the history of humanities and social sciences in Japan, the relationship between the arts and anthropology, and the study of contending discourses on material culture. He has published various articles in French peer-reviewed journals (*Cipango*, *Ebisu*, *Techniques & Culture*, *Tracés*). Kunik is working on an edited volume about Leroi-Gourhan’s mission in Japan, which is currently accepting contributions in French, English, and Japanese.



Please note that this lecture will be held at the Kyoto centre of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient

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