



CENTRE FOR ASIAN AND
TRANSCULTURAL STUDIES

INSTITUTE OF
ANTHROPOLOGY



UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

Colloquium Series of the Institute of Anthropology

Public Lectures

Actors Riding Windfalls: GDR sino-anthropology re-orienting in between multiple walls – a forgotten chapter in germanophone academia?

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In the turmoil of the takeover of the GDR's academic landscape after 1989, after the past 30 years of widespread ignorance, there is a danger of losing sight of the fact that an altogether astonishingly diverse ethnography existed there for over 40 years. On the basis of previous ethnographic agendas, in the slipstream of political guidelines of the state in its entanglements in the camp of socialist states and their sciences, in system competition with the West and certainly with the academic actors' own agendas, this ethnography has researched, mediated and published a legacy that has largely lain fallow in debates on colonialism, racism and decolonisation. This issue was recently addressed by Karoline Noack and Mareile Flitsch (2020, 2021). This lecture looks at the rather small group of sino-ethnographers and ethno-sinologists in the GDR. It aims to show how actors from the Leipzig School of philology informed China ethnography and shaped a particular (socialist) sino-anthropological GDR knowledgescape. Close contact between academic ethnography and the museum and at times with Chinese colleagues, intense dialogue with arts, history, humanities, philologies and the public, as well as moving in the windfalls of border and ideological walls, produced very particular, if not unique interpretations of material, ethno-political and economic everyday modern China, which is worth including in our current picture of the history of the field of germanophone sino-ethnology.



A two-part New Year print: 'Town and Country in Mutual Aid – Alliance of Workers and Farmers', 1956. Inv. no. SKD: 61619.

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Time: 17:00 ct. – 19:00 ct.

Location: South Asia Institute,
Lecture Hall (010.01.05), 1st Floor