

**Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften  
Zentralasien-Seminar**

# **Tibet-Kolloquium**

**Janka Linke**

**University of Leipzig**

## **Tibetan Market Strategies Within the Caterpillar Fungus Trade in Qinghai**

In recent years, a thriving market has evolved around the commodity of caterpillar fungus (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*) in eastern parts of the Tibetan plateau in China, providing the major source of cash income for ten thousands of pastoral and rural households. Valued as a mystical tonic and powerful aphrodisiac by the Chinese upper and middle classes, prices have reached a historical record over the last few years. As a commodity, caterpillar fungus links the super-modern, industrialized, fast-changing coastal areas of China Mainland and the nomadic areas of the eastern Tibetan plateau which are usually represented as poor, backward and underdeveloped in the official discourses. Picturing this linkage in terms of a Chinese domestic commodity chain, pastoral Tibetans join in as “producers”, the first link in the chain, while the caterpillar fungus wholesale is mainly operated by Chinese Muslim minorities and Han. Based on fieldwork in Yushu and Golok Prefectures (Qinghai Province), the presentation approaches questions such as the following: 1) What kind of strategies do Tibetans apply in order to participate in the marketing of caterpillar fungus? 2) Who is excluded from market participation, how and by whom? And 3), conceptualizing markets as fields of power, how powerful are Tibetans within the setting of the caterpillar fungus market in Qinghai?

**Mittwoch, 29. Januar 2014**

**18.00 Uhr c.t.**

**Invalidenstr. 118, Raum 507 (S-Bahn Nordbahnhof, U6 Naturkundemuseum)**