

HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN

Central Asian Seminar
Institute of Asian and African Studies



Tibet & Himalaya Lecture Series

Decolonising Himalayan Studies?
- Putting Theory into Practice -

29.11.21

Emma Martin
University of Manchester

Monday
6.15 CET

Colonialism and its Material Affect at the Tibet Museum

This talk considers Material Affect and Colonialism as a frame for understanding the abilities of the Tibet Museum to showcase the objects and narratives it sees as its political truth. Using the development of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA)'s New Tibet Museum as a case study I will argue that culture-based displays – of the type synonymous with representations of Tibet in Western museums – deny the political work this museum has been asked to do. In taking this position, I consider how Tibetan material culture has been transformed into a political act during the development of the Tibet Museum. This study particularly focuses on the material effect of colonialism and how its impact and the resulting material brought to and made in exile has necessitated new ways of seeing Tibet in museum spaces. By making recent histories of colonialism visible through the positioning of Tibetan things in exile as a material effect of colonialism, the Tibet Museum purposely disrupts dominant narratives of Tibet and reassess the museological possibilities of Tibetan material culture. Furthermore, I will highlight how Lhakar (lhag dkar), a Tibetan collective act of resistance to colonialism through material culture, has become a powerful museum method, transforming what appear to be culture-based exhibits into politically informed displays that privilege resistance and resilience.

Register for Zoom Link

<https://hu-berlin.zoom.us/meeting/register/u5crcu6hrzkjHNIPeTxwYcvC61Ux0sf-DIhn>

Contact: mareike.wulff.1@hu-berlin.de
tara.herbener@hu-berlin.de