

Tibet & Himalaya Lecture Series

Decolonising Himalayan Studies?

- Putting Theory into Practice -



Decolonisation is a concern that is extending into various areas of academic discourse and knowledge production. In an institutional context decoloniality, as Walter D. Mignolo (2017) puts it, has the claim to de-link (detach) epistemologies from colonial hierarchies of knowledge in order to engage in an epistemic reconstitution. But also, in popular discourse, the term 'decolonisation' currently receives an increasing amount of attention. Acknowledging this trend, the lecture series raises the question in what form decolonisation could come theoretically for the field of Himalayan studies and how the implementation could look like. Reflecting on this discourse, we have invited academics and experts from varying disciplines to share their experiences and thoughts on the matter. We hear about practical examples from their own research background and practice. Among them, some have already dealt intensively with the issue and have organized workshops and lectures addressing the issue, such as the session of the American Association of Religious Studies (2019). How do they encounter the concept of decolonisation in their specific context?

The aim is to listen and learn from each other and put the focus on Himalayan perspectives. In doing so, the lecture series seeks to stimulate a joint learning process.

„Decolonizing Tibetan/Buddhist Studies“



Natalie Avalos

1.11.21

Natalie Avalos is an assistant professor of Native American and Indigenous studies in the Ethnic Studies Department at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Dr. Avalos is an ethnographer of religion whose research and teaching focus on Indigenous religions in diaspora, healing historical trauma, and decolonization. She received her doctorate from the University of California at Santa Barbara in Religious Studies in 2015 with a special focus on Native American and Indigenous Religious Traditions and Tibetan Buddhism. She is currently working on her manuscript titled 'The Metaphysics of Decoloniality: Transnational Indigenities and Religious Refusal.' It argues that the reassertion of land-based logics among Native and Tibetan peoples not only de-centers settler colonial claims to legitimate knowledge but also articulates forms of sovereignty rooted in interdependent relations of power among all persons, human and other-than human. She is a Chicana of Apache -descent, born and raised in the Bay Area.

„Decolonizing Tibetan Studies: Empire, Ethnicity, and Rethinking Sovereignty“



8.11.21

Dawa T. Lokyitsang

Dawa T. Lokyitsang is a Cultural Anthropology PhD candidate based at the University of Colorado, Boulder. She is currently finishing Wenner-Gren funded dissertation fieldwork with Tibetan refugees in India. Her dissertation research is on the establishment of sovereignty in exile by the Tibetan refugee collective following China's invasion of Tibet in 1959 through the development of their own educational institutions in India. She is interested in the making of state and subject and vice versa, through the (re)making of institutions in the illegible landscape of exile as the drive to make a Tibetan nation legible as the invasion of Tibet transitioned into Chinese colonial occupation. Lokyitsang is also concerned with, and has written about Chinese colonialism in Tibet, Chinese imperialism more broadly, and the need for decolonizing as a necessary praxis for articulating and counteracting China's colonial and imperial occupation of Tibet and elsewhere.

„Decolonizing Our Maps: Centering More-than-Human Worlds of Conservation & Protection in Bhutan“



David M. Hecht

15.11.21

David M. Hecht is a PhD Candidate in Integrative Conservation (ICON) & Anthropology at the University of Georgia, advised by Dr. J. Peter Brosius, founder of the Center for Integrative Conservation Research (CICR). Hecht recently returned from Bhutan, finalizing his collaborative field research with the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN), the Kingdom's first and oldest environmental NGO. In his work, Hecht centers conservation strategies that work with diverse communities, voices, and knowledges to find common ground for environmental action. David is an associate editor with the Journal of Ethnobiology, a National Geographic Explorer, and a Fellow with the Firebird Foundation for Anthropological Research who work in service of indigenous peoples in their efforts to record their arts and sciences.

„Curating Absence in the Tibet Museum“



Emma Martin

29.11.21

Emma Martin is a Lecturer in Museology at The University of Manchester. She is a practice-led researcher focusing on Tibetan histories of collecting and museology and a curator with 25 years' experience in exhibition making, contemporary collecting and collaborative practice.

Monday, 6.15 CEST
Register for Zoom Link here:
<https://hu-berlin.zoom.us/j/95836666666>

„Thuenlam, Hospitality and the Neypo System- Cultural Hospitality Practices, Tourism and the Economy of Relationships in Bhutan“



Ulrike Čokl

13.12.21

Ulrike Čokl holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from University College London and a Magistra (M.A.) in Social and Cultural Anthropology from the University of Vienna. Ulli is currently a Research Associate at UCL where she combines her long-standing applied knowledge of Bhutan with ethnographic research. She has been living, working and researching in the Himalayan Kingdom intermittently since 2000. Her doctoral research examined the role of everyday traditional hospitality for relationship fostering, known in Dzongkha as thuenlam ("the harmonious way") within the context of the Bhutanese neypo system (traditional host/guest network). Emerging from her field data she developed the "thuenlam-approach" to sustainable farm/homestay tourism development. Ulrike founded the Bhutan Network (www.bhutan-network.org) in 2013 and helped build up Bhutan Homestay (www.bhutanhomestay.com), a Bhutan-based tour operator with a focus on rural and community tourism.

"Mental Disorders in Bhutan: Traditional and Modern Understandings and Interventions"



Joseph Calabrese

6.12.21

Joseph Calabrese is Reader of Medical Anthropology at University College London. A medical and psychological anthropologist and UK-registered clinical psychologist, he holds a PhD from the University of Chicago, where he combined study of anthropology and psychology. He completed postdoctoral clinical training at the Cambridge Hospital/Harvard Medical School, subsequently holding research fellowships at Harvard's Department of Social Medicine and at Green Templeton College, Oxford. His ethnographic research explores diverse approaches to understanding personhood, social change, mental illness, and intervention, with fieldwork in Bhutan, among Native Americans, and with people having severe psychiatric illnesses in Chicago and Boston. His anthropological monograph, *A Different Medicine: Postcolonial Healing in the Native American Church* (2013, OUP), explores a ritual-based postcolonial healing movement and its incorporation into clinical programmes serving Native Americans.

Central Asian Seminar
Institute of Asian & African Studies

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„Decolonisation as default perspective in language documentation“



Gwendolyn Hyslop

10.1.22

Gwendolyn Hyslop received her PhD in Linguistics from the University of Oregon. She is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Sydney and is currently a visiting Research Fellow at Humboldt University via a Humboldt Fellowship. She specialises in language documentation and historical linguistics of the Himalayas. Hyslop has conducted or supervised fieldwork in Bhutan, India, Nepal, Mexico, New Caledonia, and Alaska. Her grammar of Kurtöp was published by Brill in 2017.

„Centring Tibetan Voices: The Translations Website High Peaks Pure Earth“



Dechen Pemba

17.1.22

Dechen Pemba is a UK born Tibetan and graduated from University College London with a degree in English and German Literature. After several years working as a lobbyist and campaigner on Tibet in Berlin, she lived in Beijing for two years from 2006-2008. Since completing a Masters in Chinese Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, Dechen has been based in London and is the editor of High Peaks Pure Earth, a website that offers translations, news, and commentary from Tibetan cyberspace and social media. Dechen also serves as a researcher and consultant on Tibet-related issues.

