

Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften  
Zentralasien-Seminar

# Tibet Kolloquium

Einladung

Dr. Barbara Gerke  
(Zentralasien-Seminar)

## **Between Secrecy and Preservation: Post 1959 Transmissions of Tibetan Mercury Purification Practices**

The purification of mercury in the form of mercury-sulfide ash, called *tsothel* (*btso thal*), is considered the most refined pharmacological technique in Tibetan medicine. It is said to have been brought to Tibet in the 13th century by Ugyen Rinchen Pal and is still practised today, providing the base material for many of the popular rejuvenating 'precious pills' (*rin chen ril bu*). The advent of the Cultural Revolution in Tibet drastically reduced the opportunities to transmit the knowledge of making *tsothel*. I will discuss how two Tibetan physicians, Tenzin Choedrak (1924-2001) and Troru Tsenam (1928-2004), both of whom spent many years in Chinese prisons, became instrumental in transferring the *tsothel* practice to Tibetan medical practitioners in Indian exile and to modern Tibetan pharmacies in Tibetan areas of China. The commercial value of *tsothel* has also led to it finding a niche in the Tibetan medical GMP manufacturing in China despite government regulations prohibiting mercury in medicine. Barbara Gerke argues that teaching the practice more widely with the aim of preserving it has led to different forms of knowledge transmission among Tibetan doctors, involving the publication of pharmacological techniques that were previously kept secret and transmitted selectively only to a few students. She will also outline some of the techniques of mercury purification based on these recent publications.

**Mittwoch, 11. Juli 2012**

18.00 Uhr

Invalidenstr. 118, Raum 507

(S-Bahn Nordbahnhof, U6 Naturkundemuseum)