

Tibet Kolloquium

Dr. Marion Wettstein, Bern

Embodiment and the Intangible: Ritual dance among the Rai of Eastern Nepal



The Rai who pin down their belonging to Eastern Nepal have become known in the last few decades for a particular ritual circle dance, the sakela dance. It is composed of sequences of gestural units that relate to cultural techniques such as weaving or agricultural work, or imitate the movements of animals. Traditionally performed in the villages for a sakela (or bhume) goddess before harvest, and sometimes also before sowing, this dance is also performed in bigger cities, in Kathmandu and in other Diasporas since some years, and is meanwhile considered the 'Rai national dance'. Based on field research of the last 15 years, this presentation highlights the themes that are acted out in the gestural units of the dance, relates them to the intangible mythological concepts that are embodied with it, and asks: Can we transmit this relation between embodiment and the intangible to the contemporary context, in which the sakela dance has become a bodily practice of ethnic identity? Can an intangible concept that is embodied and therefore corporeal actually be called intangible, or do we have to break with such basic categories of distinction?

Marion Wettstein is an anthropologist and scientist of religions at the University of Bern, Switzerland. Her geographical focus is in the Eastern Himalayas, especially Nepal and Northeast India, with a special interest in religion, ritual, mythology, practice, performance, and materiality.

Dienstag, 16. Januar 2018

18.00 Uhr

Invalidenstr. 118, **Raum 507**