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Gauging the Pulse of Asia: Traditional Medicine and Capitalist Transformations

GUEST LECTURE

25.11. 2021, 5 PM CET

TŘÍDA SVOBODY 686/26, TRAINEE CENTRE 2.40 & ONLINE VIA ZOOM

This lecture will use the case of Tibetan medicine to introduce the notion of “Asian medical industries” and show that so-called “traditional” Asian medicines have become an integral part of modern Asia. As such, they need to be understood not as cultural or epistemic systems, as has been common so far, but as a prime domain where Asian transformations - sociocultural, political, economic, ecological - manifest and become visible. They are, in other words, a particularly good place to gauge the pulse of contemporary Asia.

Moving between the everyday practice of Tibetan doctors and booming Asian medical industries, and between a remote Tibetan village and Asia's global ascendancy, this lecture traces the mutual incorporation and adaptation of local culture/societies and a supposedly universal capitalism. In doing so, it shows that the practice of Asian “traditional” medicine is directly connected, and highly responsive, to large-scale transformations in and of regions like Tibet, and can thus provide unique insights into the complexities of contemporary Asia.

Short bio

Stephan Kloos is a medical anthropologist and acting director of the Institute for Social Anthropology at the Austrian Academy of Sciences. He has led numerous research projects on Tibetan medicine and its industrial transformations, including an ERC Starting Grant (RATIMED). His published work includes two edited volumes – Asian Medical Industries, in press with Routledge, and Healing at the Periphery, in press with Duke – and numerous journal articles (open access at stephankloos.org/publications)

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