



MEDICINAL DELICATESSEN:

Chinese medicine practitioners and substances in contemporary China

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This talk presents findings of a multi-sited ethnography based on recent fieldwork in Sichuan province, China: in a remote region and in a global centre of science and trade. Scholars and medical circles in the region struggle to write its histories. The East-West divide of Sichuan province provides a test-field that reflects the overall geographic and cultural frictions of the Chinese territorial and symbolic order. I will compare two “medical capitals” (yaodu) in Sichuan province: 1) one of them is contemporarily a global transfer centre for trade and pharma-science, and 2) the other one in the same province has had a similar function in the past but is now situated in the remote (Tibetan) West of the province. My encounters with providers and prescribers of medicinal substances illustrate how their practice and ways of thinking differ fundamentally from the official map of ethnic relations in China. This is true for both Tibetan and Chinese physicians, in a monastery and in a local clinic.

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KWZ, Room 0.609