

Prof. Dr. Xiaoxuan WANG

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“The Maoist Revolution and Reinvention of Religion in China”

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Institut für Sinologie, Kaulbachstr. 53, Raum E04



The post-Mao religious revival had astounded most, if not all, observers of China. This is because the Mao era was arguably one of the most oppressive periods for religious communities in China. At the height of the Cultural Revolution, one outside observer once lamented that “religion as an effective force seems to be all but nullified.” In reality, our knowledge of religious life during Mao's reign remains limited, and we know very little about how the revolutionary experience altered China's religious landscape. The speaker of this talk draws on his recent book and other research to recount stories of rural communities in southern Zhejiang and their encounters with the communist revolution. Using data from local government archives, records of religious institutions, oral history, and field research, the talk presents a nuanced view of religious life after 1949, including moments of repression, violence, survival, and, more importantly, reinvention. The talk also highlights the significance of the Maoist legacy in understanding religion and local society in contemporary China.