

Moral economic dichotomizations in the Mongolian borderlands

Inner Asia Colloquium



Presenter

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This talk introduces the major themes and theoretical insights of Dr. Waters' recent book *Moral economic transitions in the Mongolian borderlands: a proportional share* (June 2023, UCL Press) and concludes with an update from the field from October 2023. Between 2015 and 2017, Dr. Waters carried out in-depth ethnographic fieldwork on the Mongolian/Chinese border tracing how rural residents became dependent on urban, consumer debt to finance livelihoods. The book makes two contributions: first, it describes the creative networking and resource-extractive strategies residents mobilise to pay off their debts, paying particular attention to the illegal wildlife trade around Chinese medicinal plants. Second, the book introduces the concept of moral economic dichotomizations: the tendency to conceptualise society in terms of 'economic' versus 'social' forms of value in time of rapid introduction to market capitalism.

