ÖAW

AUSTRIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

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START: 4 PM (AUSTRIAN TIME)
ONLINE
INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
HOLLANDSTRASSE 11-13, 1020 VIENNA

ISA ONLINE GUEST LECTURE

COLONIAL EXTRACTION AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

SOPHIE SCHASIEPEN

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

A month after his return from southern Africa, in January 1910, Rudolf Pöch applied as lecturer for anthropology at the University of Vienna. In order for his application to be successful, he needed to be habilitated and his medical doctorate had to be recognised as equivalent to a philosophical one. The commission was enthusiastic: "Seldom has a request for habilitation met the desires of the faculty as much as the present one. … Dr Pöch is outstandingly well prepared for teaching the anthropological subject – not only in the museum and at the study desk but also through long-time, purposeful research journeys from which he brought very rich material." The bureaucracy was fast-tracked. Pöch started teaching that same summer semester.

In her presentation, Dr. Schasiepen shows how Pöch's expeditions to colonial territory were essential tools for the institutionalisation of a social network through which he built his reputation as anthropologist. She argues that this network, through oppression, exploitation and knowledge production, turned the physical remains of colonised people into means of production of capital. The institute for anthropology and ethnography at the University of Vienna, of which Pöch became the first professor, was founded on this violence.

Sophie Schasiepen obtained her PhD in history from the University of the Western Cape in 2021. She previously studied Fine Arts and Cultural Studies at the Braunschweig University of Arts and the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. From 2016 to 2018, she was a Junior Fellow at the International Research Centre Cultural Studies Vienna. She is currently a postdoctoral researcher for *Action for Restitution to Africa* (funded by the Open Society Foundations) and *Reconnecting 'objects': epistemic plurality and transformative practices in and beyond museums* (funded by the Volkswagen Foundation) at the University of the Western Cape. .

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