

Tuesday, 04 June 2013

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Place: Room 222

Universität Hamburg

Asien-Afrika-Institut

Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1, Flügel Ost

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## **Houaphan Ethnohistory of an Upland Frontier in Southeast Asia**

According to official Lao historiography, the northeastern province of Houaphan is considered as 'Birthplace of the Lao People's Democratic Republic'. Indeed, the impenetrable mountains of Houaphan next to the Northern Vietnamese border were the very base of the Lao communist forces during the decades of the Lao civil war – a sideshow of the 'Vietnam War' – until the communist takeover of 1975. The specific geographic, political and cultural conditions of this upland frontier region, such as jagged terrain, shifting political alliances, and ethnic heterogeneity, contribute to the historical significance of Houaphan. Therefore, an analysis of the history of Houaphan and its multi-ethnic population calls for a long-term regional perspective which considers the precolonial and colonial era as well as recent sociocultural and economic developments – including a critical discussion of the 'frontier' concept.

Dr. Oliver Tappe

is research fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (Halle/Germany). He has worked on questions of nation-building and historiography in contemporary Laos and currently investigates the history of the ethnically heterogeneous frontier region of Laos and Vietnam.