



KONFUZIUS-INSTITUT LEIPZIG

莱比锡孔子学院

Der Ort für chinesische Sprache und Kultur

Akademischer Vortrag

DI, 09. APRIL 2024, 18 UHR

THE MISADVENTURES OF MASTER MUGWORT

A JOKEBOOK TRILOGY FROM SONG AND MING CHINA

Elizabeth Smithrosser (University of Oxford)

This talk will introduce three premodern Chinese joke collections which all revolve around their fictional protagonist of “Master Mugwort” (Aizi). Set in the Warring States period (trad. 475–221 BCE), the three books see Master Mugwort counsel kings in the art of statecraft, take on other masters in mock philosophical debates, and wisecrack his way through this bygone age of opportunity and intrigue, giggling disciples in tow. The original Song Mugwort, attributed to literary megastar Su Shi (1037–1101), went on to inspire two sequels centuries later during the publishing boom of the late Ming. The talk will demonstrate how this “trilogy” represents a once bestselling, if today much overlooked, tradition of Chinese humor, as well as an alternative mode of late imperial engagement with the ambivalent legacies of the classical tradition.

