RINGVORLESUNG

Dienstag, 21. Dezember 2021, 12 Uhr c.t.

Dr. Matthew Vollgraff
Warburg Institute, University of London

Art and Ethnopsychology in German Melanesia

Despite being funded by the Berlin Ethnological Museum, the German anthropologist Richard Thurnwald’s expedition to the Bismarck Archipelago and the Solomon Islands in 1906–1909 prioritized the local study of indigenous cultures and customs over the acquisition of artifacts for museum collections. The anthropologist treated his fieldwork in Melanesia as a testing ground for applied ethnopsychology (Völkerpsychologie), devoting particular attention to the analysis of indigenous images and conducting psychometric tests of “higher mental activity” with visual aids. This lecture addresses the significance of Thurnwald’s ethnopsychological investigations of indigenous arts for contemporary metropolitan theories of “primitive thinking”, and their implication in issues of ‘native policy’ and labor recruitment in Germany’s Pacific colonies.

Matthew Vollgraff is a Research Associate at the Warburg Institute, University of London, where he is a member of the “Bilderfahrzeuge" Project. His research deals with the interconnected histories of aesthetics, anthropology, and the life sciences in modern Germany. Publications have appeared in Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics, Grey Room, October, and the History of Anthropology Review. He co-convenes the working group ‘Colonial Science in the German Empire’ at the Consortium for Science, Technology and Medicine.

Zum Gastvortrag ergeht herzliche Einladung