



Scuola Italiana di Studi
sull'Asia Orientale
ISEAS



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International
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KYOTO LECTURES

Thursday, December 2nd, 18:00h

Mechtild Mertz

SPEAKER

Wood Culture in Pre-Modern China and Wood Identification Sculptures, Buildings, Excavated Remains

Scholars in Japan have been using wood identification in the study of ancient wood relics for over 60 years. For the case of the culture of wood in pre-modern China, however, no such data are available to us. This lecture will present the results of the speaker's work on Chinese Buddhist sculptures in various Western collections, ancient buildings in Qinghai Province and the sunken fleet of Kublai Khan. It will proceed to offer comments on the evolution of wood usage over the ages, with special attention to the sensitivity of craftsmen and to the technical, symbolic and religious properties of wood.

Mechtild Mertz is presently an invited research fellow at the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature, Kyoto. She was first trained in Germany as a cabinet-maker and restorer, before studying East Asian art and archeology at the University of Heidelberg and at the Sorbonne in Paris, as well as wood anatomy at the "Pierre et Marie Curie" University in Paris. For her PhD as an ethnobotanist at the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris, she came to Japan to interview wood craftsmen throughout the whole country, later staying on to undertake a postdoctoral research project at the Wood Research Institute of Kyoto University. Later, she has done research on Buddhist and Taoist sculptures, and excavated Chinese wooden remains at Nanjing Forestry University. She has written a chapter with T. Ito on the analysis of wood species in *Wisdom Embodied: Chinese Buddhist and Daoist Sculpture in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, a catalogue to be published this month by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

This lecture will be held at the Italian School of East Asian Studies.

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