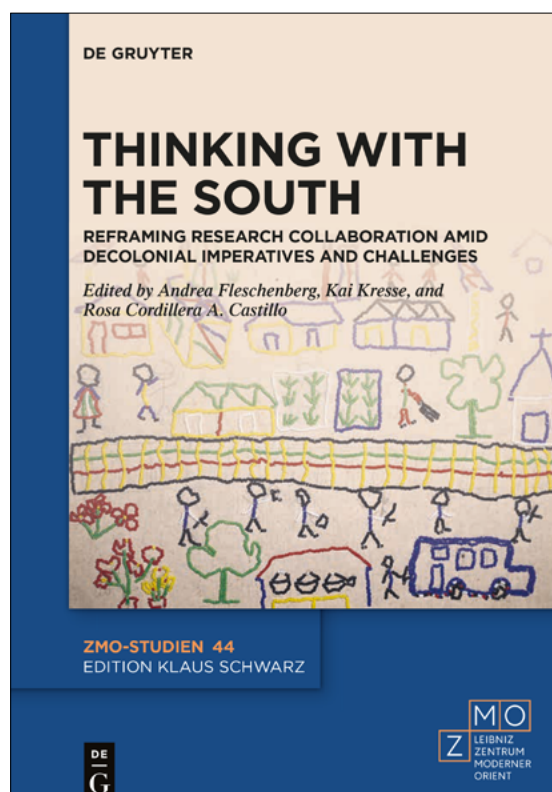


Re-Framing and Re-Enacting Research and Collaboration

Andrea Fleschenberg, Rosa Cordillera A. Castillo, Kai Kresse

Too many contributions to knowledge, traditions of knowledge and individuals producing knowledge from marginalized regions in the so-called global South, but also from minoritarian and diasporic contexts, continue to be underappreciated in global scholarly conversations. Such contributions to theory building and emancipatory praxes are significantly sidelined and rarely circulate internationally. Although there is a momentum of things beginning to change, this imbalance reflects the uneven geopolitics of knowledge production, which are arguably still skewed to scholarship originating from the global North. This inequality is due to a combination of factors that include the uneven distribution of resources and publishing opportunities, but above all the Eurocentrism that devalues, if not erases or ignores, epistemologies, materialities and praxes elsewhere. With urgent calls to decolonize academia, questions arise on how knowledge production could and should be conducted in order to redress existing imbalances, injustices and their diverse ways of perpetuation within current and ongoing structures. That is, there is a necessity to transform systems of Higher Education and research that have for many years been based on Eurocentrism, with underpinning hierarchical conceptions of human beings and teleological models of human development in mind. There is, as Achille Mbembe asserts, a “global Apartheid in Higher Education” that must be overcome (Mbembe 2016, 38). In short, thought and thinkers from the South do not get the attention and exposure they deserve, and so their fundamental value among their social peers is not adequately recognized.

If Eurocentrism can be read as a shorthand for ‘thinking from/with the North’, its alternative, ‘thinking from/with the South’ (many different Souths) needs to be more systematically and comprehensively embraced – that is, made visible and accessible in all academic arenas and levels, in all its variety and complexity. This means that Western academia needs to learn to be able to take on board relevant advice, texts, intellectual traditions as well as current critical interventions from non-Western and non-Europhone regions in order to understand and shape alternative ways to navigate the world and address and tackle pressing global issues. On this basis, we seek to stimulate and cultivate a serious, long-term and collaborative engagement, as denoted in *Thinking with the South* – the title of our forthcoming book. This work is the outcome of a range of collaborative activities (seminars, workshops) of the ZMO-based working group *Thinkers and Theorizing from the South* and the Berlin-based transregional and interdisciplinary *co²libri* initiative that ZMO is part of, which is funded as a signature project by the Berlin University Alliance (*co²libri* is short



for conceptual collaboration: living borderless research interaction).

Needless to say, contributions from marginalized places and positions are just as crucial to knowledge of ‘the world’, ‘human beings’ and ‘society’ as contributions from more recognized, hegemonic places of knowledge production. As critics of different kinds have long argued, the dominance of conceptual and institutional Eurocentrism in global academia and knowledge production needs to be reined in and overcome. Yet global progress on this front has been incremental and slow despite recent epistemic and equity debates. Indeed, the larger project of rewriting and reshaping the humanities and social sciences globally by integrating key references, arguments and contributors from the South as well as from minoritarian and diasporic context perspectives has only just begun. A key pathway consists in arduous, empirically based work, thus fundamental research (*Grundlagenforschung*) that requires diverse kinds of inter-/disciplinary and linguistic expertise and can only be achieved by way of a collab-

orative, decentred approach across the Global North and South.

This is an edited excerpt from the Introduction to the forthcoming volume *Thinking with the South: Reframing Research Collaboration amid Decolonial Imperatives and Challenges*,

edited by Andrea Fleschenberg, Kai Kresse and Rosa Cordillera A. Castillo. Volume 44 in the series ZMO-Studien *Thinking with the South* (<https://www.degruyter.com/document/isbn/9783110780567/html?lang=en>).

The volume is linked to the recently edited work in the ZMO se-

ries, *Thinking the Re-Thinking of the World: Decolonial Challenges to the Humanities and Social Sciences from Africa, Asia and the Middle East*, ed. by Kai Kresse and Abdoulaye Sounaye, which appeared open access in December 2022: https://repositorium.zmo.de/receive/zmo_mods_00000368.

Invited Response

By Sonja Hegasy

Thinking outside the US–European box might actually mean that colleagues from the global South without a PhD get a chance to apply for a post-doc programme based on their contributions to academia. Furthermore, to counter the current system, Western academia will have to think about how to do justice to their local interlocutors and collaborators in the field. Have their ideas been clearly attributed? This is an easy task to fulfil, as a bit of awareness and discipline is all what is needed (to spell it out: all researchers simply need to write down who they first heard the idea from, so that the source is not lost until the publication is out). Much can be done to counter educational apartheid.

Indeed, ground-breaking works from the South rarely get the same seriousness of attention as their US and European counterparts. And if they do, the focus often

remains first and foremost on criticism. This might in itself be an obsession of Western 20th-century thought: Criticizing scholars before summarizing and “thinking through” their material has become a means of positioning oneself at the expense of those others. Such smart criticism can easily be another form of self-centredness. If an academic cannot recapitulate somebody else's work (because they only know a fraction of the work or because they do not understand the references; or because it is a different and difficult writing style), he or she can in fact choose not to criticize it. If we compare how thinking through Habermas or Foucault is done in Europe and the US, we should also be able to apply this to thinkers from the global South such as Mohammed al-Jabri, Hassan Hanafi or Taha Abderrahmane.

PROFILES

Re-Visiting and Exploring the Early Modern Archive in India: Time, Objects and Practices

Amrita Chattopadhyay

My doctoral thesis, recently submitted at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, explored objects of value, consumption and circulation in 16th to 18th century India with the Mughal empire at the helm of political administration and economic affairs. The research is located at the ‘material turn’ in historical studies burgeoning since the 1980s, and has in its foreground objects, materiality and associated practices within the interlaces of power, labour, usage and exchange. Drawing insights from a growing scholarship on this topic, the research contextualizes the study of material culture in the socio-political, religious and economic policies of the

Mughal empire.¹ At the same time, it also includes the activities of other social communities and economic actors, such as European companies, private traders, foreign merchants and local actors operating in the subcontinent and, crucially, involved in shaping the imperial and sub-imperial milieu of cultural efflorescence.

Foremost, the thesis focuses on a bevy of objects held as household possessions. At the same time, it gives autonomy and agency to individual objects, such as illuminant, leather, perfume, paper and ink.

¹ *Living the Good Life: Consumption in the Qing and the Ottoman Empires of The Eighteenth Century*, eds. Elif Akcetin and Suraiya Faroqhi, Brill, Leiden, 2018.

Reinstating five different but interconnected Mughal materials to their experiential, everyday relevance, it departs from the frameworks that solely put emphasis on style and physicality. In situating these Mughal objects within the historical processes, my research explores the sensory dimension of the material–human relationship.² Sense remains one way of uniting the five objects and lays the bedrock for the thesis. The other factor that brackets them together is their marginal representation in ex-

² Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: French Social Imagination*, Breg Publishers, London, 1986, 6; James McHugh, *Sandalwood and Carrion: Smell in Indian Religion and Culture*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2012, 51.



Travellers Gathered at Night, circa 1640, Mughal dynasty, by Payag with later addition by Bichitr. Source: San Diego Museum of Art, accession no. 1990.350.

isting historical works. Possibly due to their perceived material impermanence, they have suffered long neglect in terms of both style and significance, especially in the Mughal context.³ In acknowledging the sustained absence, this thesis, thus, undertakes a detailed investigation of five materials and explores their discrete object-lives, as well as their interconnectedness in charting the early modern material world.

Methodologically, the thesis relies upon the approach of 'documentary archaeology'. Although the objects recovered from texts and documents lack physical and tangible forms, this method "allows us to treat the words that describe them as fragments or traces left by things that once existed".⁴ Through this method, the thesis attempts to retrieve the histories of these objects as embedded in the world of words from existing textual and archival sources and contextualizes these past artefacts as bearers of cultural practices, sites of technological innovation, modes of value-attribution and objects of consumption and circulation.

Situating the research within the literary and cultural flourish of the Mughal paper-bureaucracy and Indo-Persianate milieu, the research

3 Richard Grassby, 'Material Culture and Cultural History', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35 (4), 2005, 591–603; *Handbook of Material Culture*, eds. Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Kuchler, Michael Rowlands and Patricia Syper, Sage Publications, London, 2006, 61.

4 Daniel Lord Smail, 'Persons and Things in Marseille and Lucca, 1300–1450', in *The Oxford Handbook of History and Material Culture*, eds. Ivan Gaskell and Sarah Anne Carter, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2020, 379–399.

oires, correspondence, letters, foreign travel accounts and European factory records.⁵ It also brings forth unpublished Mughal materials, such as Persian manuscripts on crafts, household manuals and other archival documents in the form of *farmans* (royal orders), *siyaha amwal* (registers of deceased people), *yaddasht* (memoranda), land grants and property dispute papers, scattered across archives as valuable Mughal objects themselves. Through translation, re-reading and critical analysis, these materials have been read in corroboration with Mughal paintings.

The Mughal material inventory and five discrete objects studied in the thesis act as primary sites where the state and society interacted with each other in determining the material landscape of the period. The political ascendancy of the Mughals, paralleled by its fledging economic presence in interaction with other socio-economic communities, informed the milieu where objects acquired meaning, interacted with people and forged lives of their own. The bureaucratic state was the primary institution controlling and regulating the production of the objects. The diversification of material forms and the maximization of product output over short durations of time, based on local and exotic ingredients, highlighted the production mechanism active during the Mughal rule. Through agrarian land control, the procurement of raw materials, taxation, land grants and

5 Farhat Hasan, *Paper, Performance and the State: Social Change and Political Culture in Mughal India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2021.

legal promulgations, the state exercised its power through the objects. A variegated consumption milieu catering to the royal court and household included both quotidian and luxury requirements. Facilitating indoor and peripatetic activities and intellectual, religious, as well as military pursuits, these objects, with their respective materiality, interacted with each other in keeping the empire functioning well. Embedded in the ecological frontiers and natural conditions of the environs, the usage and practice of these objects found their fitting contexts



Rosewater Sprinkler in gilt silver with designs of flowers, birds and animals and pierced central knob, Mughal empire, circa 1700, artist unknown. Source: Victoria and Albert Museum, accession no. IS.46-1988.

accordingly. As determinants of work and leisure, the employment of these objects was simultaneously crucial in the enactment of social intimacy, the attainment of pleasure and the execution of private affairs and public undertakings. For delineating daytime activities from nocturnal ones in outdoor and indoor spaces, the timely application of objects was dependent on the manual labour of paid professionals, who served vital roles in the social milieu.

In exploring the various roles of the Mughal state, the professional groups affiliated with objects' production, the socio-religious communities associated with objects' lives and the labour and paid services rendering these objects' usability, the research

highlights objects with distinct materiality as a bulwark of power and identities. Object-consumption guided by integrative imperial policies was simultaneously coupled with material practices closely tied to cultural notions of beauty and virtues, or social perceptions of dirt, impurity and untouchability. The circulation of these objects as diplomatic gifts or sacred offerings, or as trade items through expansive land-based and maritime networks of exchange and economic activities, led to the creation of a world of interconnectedness and reciprocities among polities, both local and global. Mughal nobility, foreign private traders and local merchants became central to objects' ascendancy in economic circuits of profit and mercantile dominance. The all-embracing empire was simultaneously fissured by underlying anxieties and socio-economic apprehensions caused by property disputes, thefts, displacements, transforming social relations, physical damage and material losses caused by the possession, consumption and transfer of these objects. Physical mobility, and the cultural movements of these objects, thus, gave rise to new regimes of craft-based knowledge enriching the material flourish of the period. Knowledge, in the form of improved techniques, refined tools, elaborate recipes, skilled artisanal expertise, monthly salaries and skilled labour, came to be standardized through extensive documentation and written records, encour-

aged by state patronage. In studying all of these and in finally situating the research at the cross-section of literary flourish and material culture, the PhD thesis examines Mughal objects, their socio-economic lives and their cultural biographies through the close reading of a rich corpus of historical narratives.

Intertwined with the themes and method of the above-discussed thesis, the research re-positions itself within the purview of the Timely Histories project. It brings to the fore the medieval and early-modern period in Indian history and the archival possibilities it offers in investigating time as a historical category. The archive, in its literary, descriptive, experiential and numerical capacity, embeds and retrieves time and temporalities from the early-modern context. Primarily focused on the National Archives of India, New Delhi and the West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata, my research for the project integrates Persianate documents with regional records produced in vernacular languages, such as Bengali, as well as in English. Delving into the judicial and revenue records, it aims to understand the nature and process of the documentation of time and its likely categories. The archive, inclusive of the rich early-modern literary sources, includes court chronicles, travel accounts, memoirs, biographical accounts, household manuals, craft-based manuscripts and regional ballads. Considering the cultural specificities, the research fo-

cuses on natural time, as well as social time, and the distinct vocabularies used and employed for it. It focuses on different spaces, such as courts, households, karkhanas, prisons and mausoleums, as well as outdoor settings and activities, such as travel, hunting and military campaigns, in order to comprehend time and delineate work from leisure. Understanding the convergences and divergences between labour time, auspicious time and agrarian time, it further attempts to examine the historical processes of revenue collection, inheritance, mortgage deeds and craft production as bearers and representors of time. Finally, it studies the materiality and mechanisms of time-keeping devices, such as illuminants and musical instruments, and the employment of manual timekeepers as part of the archival inquiry. In bringing all these together and in conversation with each other, the research aims at conceptualizing time and temporalities in the early-modern Indian context.

Amrita Chattopadhyay is a PhD Research Scholar at Jawaharlal Nehru University at the Centre for Historical Studies. She finished her graduation (2010–2013) and post-graduation (2013–2015) in History from Jadavpur University. She is currently conducting archival research on historical documents and literary texts composed between 1600–1850 CE on behalf of the ZMO hosted research project Timely Histories: A Social History of Time in South Asia.

ACTIVITIES

ZMO COLLOQUIUM 2023/2024

Materialities of Empire and Nation-State: Experiences in Asia, Africa and the Middle East

Stefan B. Kirmse

Background: USGS auf Unsplash

The ZMO winter colloquium engages with materialities and their everyday experience in the context of empires and post-imperial or post-colonial statehood. In doing so, it asks crucial methodological questions about the scope of materiality and the nature of the archives required to study such experiences in the disciplines of humanities and social sciences. Both empires and their suc-

cessors become visible and tangible in material form: through built infrastructure, practices of documenting and bureaucracy, and discursive socio-cultural productions. These materialities and their everyday experience constitute an important axis of state-society relationship(s), encompassing not only economic, socio-political or cultural domains, but also extending to sensory experiences and the body.

The diversity of such experiences, rooted partly in cultural, social, class and gender differences, among others, can only be richly captured by examining multiple perspectives, not only through the use of multiple languages and by paying attention to vernacular terms, but, preferably, also by innovatively expanding the notion of archives. Placing actors centre-stage, the lectures in

this colloquium will critically engage with how materiality can be a fruitful lens through which to explore the experiences of both those who design and frame forms of control (e.g., state

authorities), and those who engage with, negotiate or even subvert them in the everyday.

The lecture series takes place between October 2023 and March

2024 (26 October 2023, 30 November 2023, 25 January 2024, 29 February 2024, 21 March 2024). Please see <https://www.zmo.de/veranstaltungen/vortragsreihen/zmo-kolloquium-im-wintersemester-23-24>.

ACTIVITIES

CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

Women's Voices from the Global South: Protest and Transformation, 10–12 May 2023, ZMO

Deepra Dandekar

The three-day online conference *Women's Voices from the Global South: Protest and Transformation* was organized at ZMO from 10 to 12 May 2023. It brought together mostly women scholars and woman-centric scholarship on women's life journeys from the Global South – narratives that specially highlighted women's self-conscious and agential transformation as a result of their everyday negotiation with multiple hierarchies, their strategic dis- or realignments, and their protest and resistance movements. As argued, it was not as if these struggles always resulted in personal victory or glory for women. Instead, conference participants argued that these struggles resulted in the empowerment of women, enabling them to "see" through systemic oppression. It was this agential "seeing" that then held the power of subversion and resistance.

The conference findings demonstrated that women protagonists from the Global South were not only aware of their traditional positions – along with all their inbuilt patriarchal limitations that, oftentimes, resulted in placing them at the receiving end of personal violence – but also sought to complicate their social roles within pre-existing hierarchies in order to contend and grapple with the violence they faced. Framing the gendered transformation of women in the Global South required (us) scholars at the conference to engage with the social category of 'woman', that, in the postcolonial context of the Global South, transcends questions of assigned biology. The category 'woman' instead negotiates micro-regional and socio-religious patriarchies that perceive this same hierarchy as part of



On their way to a temple festival, 2003 Madurai (India).
Image Courtesy: Deepra Dandekar

a discursive model about indigeneity. Divided between the postcolonial moment of reclaiming honourable indigeneity, hitherto oppressed within colonialism, without rowing backwards on the gains achieved through modernity: equality and gender justice; this necessitated women from the Global South seeking empowerment to build their positions along intersectional lines. They simultaneously negotiated between the bastions of indigeneity and internal reform on the one hand, and colonial modernity on the other, that remained deeply connected with the underbelly of postcolonial modernity.

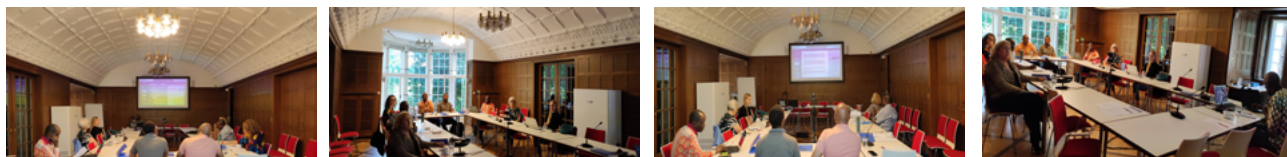
The conference papers discussed various context-based issues about the complexities of the history of women's empowerment in the Global South. While Benedikt Pontzen (ZMO) presented Goddess Akonnedi's poignant story from 19th century Ghana, Rukiya Swaleh (Pwani University, Kenya) and Jasmin Mahazi (ZMO) outlined the contributions of invisibilized women Qur'an teachers among the Swahili-speaking people of the Western Indian Ocean. Runa Chakraborty Paunksnis (Kaunas University, Lithuania) stressed the agency expressed

by Indian Dalit women writers, while Sumrin Kalia (University College London) discussed women's participation in far-right, anti-blasphemy political movements in Pakistan. Karin Polit (Tübingen University) outlined the life journey of the woman religious leader, Kamla Devi Butola, and her inspiring narrative of becoming a powerful priest in Garhwal (Uttar Pradesh, India), and Mrinal Pande (Münster University) discussed the role of female representation from the Global South in online streaming media in the North. Fatemeh Sadeghi's (University College London) poignant paper on women's resistance against veiling in contemporary Iran, which stressed the role of mothers in the resistance movement, was followed by Arkamitra Ghatak's (Heidelberg University) paper on the agency expressed by a female Bengali Guru in early 20th century India.

The conference ended with an in-depth discussion on how the papers could be organically tied-up in a collected and co-authored volume published by the ZMO Studien (De Gruyter). It is planned to publish an open access volume in 2025.

'Backs of the Past'; Visions of the Future: (Re)constructing Memory, History and Herstory from the Backs of Women from the Global South, 6–7 June 2023, ZMO

Heike Liebau



This two-day workshop took place at ZMO (and online) on 6 and 7 June 2023. It was sponsored by the Leibniz Research Alliance Value of the Past, which aims at inquiring into the value that societies attach to the past, both throughout history and in the present day. Organized by Abdoulaye Sounaye (ZMO) and Olutayo Adesina (University of Ibadan, Nigeria), whose visit at ZMO from May to June 2023 was also financed by the Leibniz Research Alliance Value of the Past, this workshop discussed various forms of valuing the past.

A major aim of the workshop was to discuss and compare oral traditions of transmitting narratives about the past from generation to generation in different cultures and societies of West Africa (Nigeria), South America (Brazil), South Asia (India) and Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan). The workshop started with some reflections presented by Olutayo Adesina on oral traditions in Yoruba society in West Africa.

His paper centred on the narratives that mothers transmit to the children strapped to their backs, and how that influences the processes of identity formation and their understanding of society. Mother–child and family relations were discussed in several other case studies, in particular, those discussing the socialization of children in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan (Baktygul Shabdán, Frankfurt a. M.), the perception of patriarchy among Indian rural women (Ruchi Verma, Delhi) and raising girls in rural India (Chandani Tiwari, Pune). Other papers discussed narratives that went beyond the family and concerned larger groups in society. They explored oral narratives and leadership among black Quilombola women in Brazil (Nathalia Dothling Reis), memories of Indian partition among Punjabis (Aarshi Dua, Delhi), memories and traditions in an Afro-Brazilian museum (Fernanda Heberle, Rio Grande do Sul) and Afro-Brazilian women and memories of displacement (Ana Alakija, Boston).

Participants were invited to discuss the relationship between oral history and historiography and both the meaning and the perception of historiography in processes of valuing the past; the role of oral history in the dissemination of (historical) knowledge from generation to generation, especially from women to children; and the concept of witnesses to history (Zeitzeuge) in this context. Overall, the workshop sought to develop a shared understanding of the social dimensions of intergenerational engagements with the past, from multiple cultural and intellectual perspectives.

The topics covered point to recollections and reconstructions of the past as part of serious history yet to be properly engaged with or written. This workshop made the case for a historiography that emphasizes the accounts of men, women and children in cultural milieu devoted to the oral transmission of information and data.

(Un)growing into Generational Roles, 7–9 June 2023, ZMO

Samuli Schielke

Organized by the Age and Generation research unit at ZMO, the conference *(Un)growing into Generational Roles* brought together scholars from the disciplines of anthropology, sociology and history who presented research extending across Euro-American, Middle Eastern, Central, South and Southeast Asian and other localities and migratory trajectories. The conference aimed at understanding intergenerational relations as a key intersection where the transformation of family relations, social power relations and translocal transformation processes can be observed.

The conference was organized into three consecutive sessions. In the first session on practices of care for future generations, Elizabeth Saleh and Nadya Sbaiti's paper, "Intergenerational knowledge as intellectual care", explored girls' schools and Jesuit viticulture projects in Lebanon. In his presentation, Roderick Galam addressed "Intergenerational contract and the vitality of obligation in the provision of care" among young Filipino men engaged in unpaid labour to gain entrance into seafaring careers. Farah Hallaba and Reem Badr explored the depiction of Gulf migration in Egyptian cinema and

television in their presentation, titled "What did migration to the Gulf turn the father figure into?" Adel Kosherbayeva presented her study, "Family businesses in Kazakhstan", addressing the different skills and ambitions of entrepreneur fathers and sons.

The second session on the transfer and silencing of knowledge was opened by a comparative programmatic paper by the Age and Generation research unit entitled "Silence, secrecy, ignorance, and the making of class and status across generations". Different modes of silencing were explored by Benjamin Ale-Ebrahim in his paper, "Queering



Corniche of Ajman on UAE National Day, UAE 2021. Image courtesy: Samuli Schielke



Group picture in front of ZMO's entrance door.

generational transition among LGBTQ Arabs and Muslims in the United States” and Anu Krishna in her presentation, “The cardamom pickers: intergenerational tales of caste-based gendered discourses of work”.

The final session took up the issue of intergenerational disruption and transmission in the wake of wars and conflicts. Magdalena Suerbaum presented her ongoing research “How Syrian parents talk to their children about the war”. In his paper, “Minor genealogies of Pales-

tine”, Arpan Roy pursued the interruptions of genealogical succession among the Romani people of Palestine, and Ermina Chiara Calabrese addressed the effect of the Lebanese uprising of 2019 among Hizbollah party members’ families in her presentation, “Revolution in the family”. Sana Chavoshian and Younes Saramifar concluded the conference with, “We are history”, an enquiry into generations that were militarized in the aftermath of the Iran–Iraq War.

Family and kinship were at the heart of most discussions, which showed that there is more to intergenerational roles than their transmission from parents to children. Care in a wider context and the transfer of knowledge proved to be very useful concepts, especially in light of the proliferation of ambiguities, disruptions, silences and violent acts of silencing highlighted by the presentations.

Intelligence Services and Democracy in Germany: An Area of Tension. A “Learning Intelligence” Workshop, 11 August 2023, ZMO

Alessa Voßkamp



The project team (left to right): Ali Dogan, Noura Chalati, Alessa Voßkamp, Sophia Hoffmann.

On 11 August, the “Learning Intelligence” research group (Freigeist-Fellowship VolkswagenStiftung 2017–2022, see <https://www.zmo.de/forschung/ergaenzende-forschung/forschungsgruppe-learning-intelligence>), led by Prof Dr Sophia Hoffmann, hosted a final workshop titled *Intelligence Services and Democracy in Germany: An Area of Tension?* at ZMO. After several years of research, Prof Dr Sophia Hoffmann, Ali Dogan and Noura Chalati observed that the discourse around intelligence in Germany in 2023 often seemed to circle back to two topics: democratic oversight and the problem of right-wing extremism. With the project ending, this final event took the form of a workshop bringing together researchers, journalists, practitioners, former practitioners and Bundestag staff all working on intelligence. The event was subject to the Chatham House Rules to enable an open discussion on all sides. The project’s student assistant, Alessa Voßkamp, helped to organize the workshop.

The workshop featured a keynote lecture by Sophia Hoffmann on the project's main findings and also included introductory thoughts on the topic of the workshop as well as two panels and a final plenary discussion. Each panel consisted of four participants: one practitioner, one journalist and two researchers.

The first panel, "Democratic Oversight vs. Secrecy" was moderated by Noura Chalati and discussed the dilemma of how we can respect the need for secrecy and

how much and what kind of control of intelligence work is necessary in a democratic society. We were happy to host four experts on the topic, who engaged in lively discussions with approximately thirty participants: The discussion of oversight is driven by the reasons why control is necessary. One of these reasons was tackled in the second panel, "Right-Wing Extremism and German Intelligence Services", moderated by Ali Dogan. The panelists discussed right-wing extremist cas-

es in security authorities and the problems and dangers these cases pose to democracy. Together with the participants, views were exchanged as to where the problems lie in combating right-wing extremism in security agencies and how these could be better tackled.

The concluding plenary discussion highlighted the need for an ongoing exchange on this issue and for more funding and institutionalization of academic research on intelligence in Germany.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Mediating the Unknown, Film Series, March – July 2023, ZMO

Vincent Favier

How can we portray individuals' spirituality? How can filming help mediate the feelings and sensations inherent to religious and spiritual practices? What are the challenges involved in representing and mediating such practices and knowledge that are sometimes invisible or even secret? The idea for the film series *Mediating the Unknown* emerged from an interest in exploring religiosity and spirituality, as well as initiation and education, through the lens of audiovisual materials. Providing an insightful alternative to conventional anthropological research, some of these topics are central to the Remoboko research programme that focuses on religion, morality and intellectual culture in West African universities. Curated by the members of the Remoboko research group, the series took place at ZMO between March and July 2023.

In total, nine documentary films were screened, among which there were four short films. The series focused mainly on films shot in sub-Saharan Africa and a few shot in the Americas (*The Secret of the Tribe*, directed by Jose Padilha; *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*, directed by Maya Deren; and part of Werner Herzog's *Pilgrimage*, shot in Mexico and Russia). The series started off with the screening of the film *Living with Boko Haram*, directed by Trond Waage, which gives an account of life under the threat of attacks and kidnappings in northern Nige-



Presentation of *Voodoo: Mounted by the Gods* by Alberto Venzago on 4 July 2023.

ria. While the insurgent group rejects a Western model of governance and education in Nigeria, Dieudo Hamadi's *Examen d'État* points out the flaws of both the State and its education system in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Like students in Congo, individuals often resort to religious or spiritual practices to cope with their past and address the current challenges of life, a theme that is central to Jean Rouch's ethnographic films. Three of these, dealing with possession and initiation practices in Ghana (*Les Maîtres Fous*) and Niger (*Tourou & Bitti; Initiation à la Danse des Possédés*), were screened. The film series ended with two films about voodoo practices and beliefs in two different yet related contexts: in Haiti, with Maya Deren's *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*, as an outcome of the Atlantic slave trade, and in Benin, with *Voodoo: Mounted by the Gods* by Alberto Venzago, from where the practice originates.

ZMO at Berlin Bishkek Art Weeks, 14 May 2023, Berlin

Aksana Ismailbekova and Nikolaos Olma

On 14 May 2023, Aksana Ismailbekova and Nikolaos Olma organized a panel discussion in Berlin, which brought together early career researchers from across Germany conducting research on and in Kyrgyzstan.

The discussion was part of the Berlin Bishkek Art Weeks, a two-week event organized from 12 to 28 May at the former Mercedes-Benz car dealership in Berlin Kreuzberg by a group of Berlin-based young creative artists. The aim of the Art Weeks was to offer a new perspective on the ongoing debate about migration through discussions, art and culture, and, to this end, the event featured workshops, dance performances, concerts and sound sessions and open-air film screenings, as well as an art auction.

The panel discussion took place against the back-



Panel discussion with Aksana Ismailbekova and Nikolaos Olma. Photo: Rufat Sultanaliyev

drop of an art exhibition by a collective of Berlin and Kyrgyzstan-based artists and, on the day, the panellists were joined by photographer Dascha Nestorowa, one of the initiators of the Berlin Bishkek Art Weeks, who very kindly showed them around.

The panel discussion itself was divided into three sessions. During the morning session on environmental change, Nikolaos Olma (Berlin) and Daler Kaziev (Augsburg) discussed pollution and agricultural change. After a traditional Kyrgyz lunch, consisting of *manty* and *plov*, the discussion

resumed with a session on migration and mobility, where Louise Bechtold (Frankfurt) and Aksana Ismailbekova (Berlin) spoke about migration, care and social status. In the final session on minority issues and diaspora, Barbara Meier (Jena) and Reina Arturova (Magdeburg) talked about women's activism and the transnational aspirations of students.

The day closed with the screening of a documentary film on migration and the intergenerational care of families in Kyrgyzstan, shot by journalist and filmmaker Zinaida Almazbekova, whose presence and contribution to discussions was gratefully appreciated.

To find out more about the Berlin Bishkek Art Weeks go to https://bb-artweeks.com/bb_art_program/.

Kiswahili Festival at ZMO

Maxwell Omondi Ondieki

On 5 June 2023, the Baraza La Kiswahili (BALAKI-BE) fraternity at Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, in conjunction with Humboldt University, hosted Madim Nash (Nash MC), the renowned HipHop artist from Tanzania. Known throughout East Africa as a staunch ambassador of the Kiswahili language, the artist used his songs to entertain and educate the audience about the state of morals in Tanzania and how Hip-Hop can be used to spread messages of peace, equality and unity in society.

Recalling how Germany has continued to make significant contributions to the spread of Kiswahili in public life and political processes, Nash MC used his lyrics as a reference to discuss the prominent role played by Kiswahili in promoting mutual comprehension between Germans and East Africans.

Drawing on his previous work – participating in and initiating various movements to discuss the relationship between language, art and ethics education – Nash MC wound up the occasion by asking Western nations to appreciate and respect African cultures, emphasizing that morals are a cultural matter and each community has its own traditions.

The BALAKI-BE is a Swahili-speaking platform for researchers, students and interested members of the public. It is organized between ZMO and African Studies at HU Berlin



HipHop sounds at ZMO.

by Kai Kresse and Lutz Diegner. Interactions usually take place once a month during semester time. For further information on the Baraza please see <https://www.zmo.de/en/events/baraza-la-kiswahili-la-berlin>.

Should you have any questions about the Baraza, please contact our colleague Maxwell Omondi at MaxwellOmondi.Ondieki@zmo.de.

"The best books to see how cultural diversity both sustained and brought down the Russian Empire" ZMO colleague Stefan Kirmse was asked by the platform shepherd.com to recommend a personal list of the "five best books to see how cultural diversity both sustained and brought down the Russian Empire". Kirmse is an expert on Russian and East European studies and author of the book *The Lawful Empire. Legal Change and Cultural Diversity in Late Tsarist Russia* (CUP 2019). Please have a look at his recommendations and feel inspired to plunge deeper into the topic, <https://shepherd.com/best-books/how-cultural-diversity-sustained-russian-empire>.

When in 2019 the Egyptian-Australian Amro Ali wrote the essay "On the Need to Shape the Arab Exile Body in Berlin" he initiated a whole new awareness around a city in



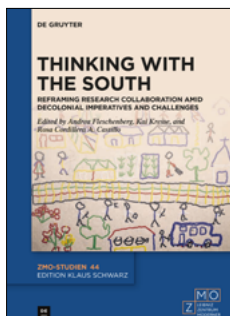
transformation. Meanwhile the Arab Filmfestival ALFILM celebrated its 10th edition, an Arab book store opened, Arab jam sessions, Jazz clubs, music schools and hafla- (party) places popped up all over the city. Vegan kibbeh nayeh (Tartar) must be a Berlin invention! The editors Hanan Badr and Nahed Samour assembled numerous players in this field to produce the volume *Arab Berlin* that will be published on 23 November 2023. In the book, Badr and Samour present the first study of Arab culture in Berlin in a wide array of interviews, essays, academic articles and photos. See <https://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-6263-4/arab-berlin/?number=978-3-8394-6263-8>.

Deepra Dandekar, research fellow at ZMO and editor of the bi-annual

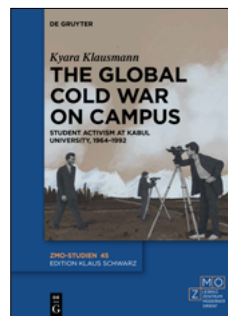


academic journal *Nidān: International Journal for Indian Studies* was happy to announce that the journal would be published from July 2023 onwards by Heidelberg Asian Studies Publishing (HASP) in an open access mode. *Nidān* focuses on Indian studies broadly including the Indian / South Asian diaspora. It is an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural journal that encourages scholarship on Indian history, society, culture, religion, philosophy, politics, economics and geography, among other aspects. For the journal's homepage see <https://hasp.uni-heidelberg.de/journals/nidan/index>.

The latest edition from July 2023 is a special issue entitled *Ontologies of Relational Space in South Asia*, guest edited by Venugopal Maddipati.



Andrea Fleschenberg, Kai Kresse, and Rosa Cordillera A. Castillo. 2024. *Thinking with the South. Reframing Research Collaboration amid Decolonial Imperatives and Challenges*. ZMO Studien 44, Open Access. De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston, 280p. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/isbn/9783110780567/html>



Kyara Klausmann. 2023. *The Global Cold War on Campus. Student Activism at Kabul University, 1964–1992*. ZMO Studien 45, Open Access. De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston, 238p. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/isbn/9783111150543/html>

Texts in Context

The Tatar Poor. Konstantin Lavrskii (1884). With an introduction by Stefan B. Kirmse, Text in Context no. 3, 2023, 40p. Online https://repositorium.zmo.de/receive/zmo_mods_00000443.

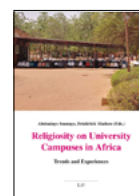
Working Papers

Agit Kadino. 2023. *Bewältigungsstrategien und Selbstpositionierungen von syrischen Geflüchteten im ALG-II-Bezug*. ZMO Working papers 36, 15p. Online https://repositorium.zmo.de/receive/zmo_mods_00000444.

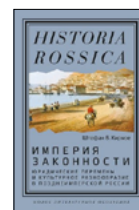
Elad Giladi. 2023. *Saudi Arabia – Paris – Berlin: Some thoughts about time, place, and language*. ZMO Working Papers 37, 7p. Online https://repositorium.zmo.de/receive/zmo_mods_00000496.

Blog

Stefan B. Kirmse. 2023. *250 Jahre Toleranzedikt. Zarin Katharina II. und die Grenzen der Toleranz*, 11.7.2023, <https://justimino.hypotheses.org/>



Abdoulaye Sounaye, Frédéric Madore. Eds. 2023. *Religiosity on University Campuses. Trends and Experiences*. LIT, Berlin, 322p.



Штефан Б. Кирмзе. 2023. *Империя законности. юридические перемены и культурное разнообразие в позднеимперской России*, НЛО, Москва

For further publications see <https://www.zmo.de/publikationen/index.html>.

WELCOME ZMO welcomes back former colleagues [Majja Susarina](#) and [Sophie Wilske](#). The former will start in November as a project coordinator for the newly started projects "In Pursuit of 'Legality' and 'Justice'" and "Crafting Entanglements". The latter started in mid-September in a newly established position in the field of data collection and reporting, as well as organizational support and guest relations.

Dr [Deniz T. Kiliçoğlu](#) joined ZMO in May 2023. He is an interdisciplinary scholar of ideas and narratives and studied economics at Middle East Technical University. He received his PhD in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton University. His current DFG-funded project at ZMO analyzes national(ist) narratives and sentiments in contemporary Turkish school books to shed light on how nationalism frames the cognitive and emotive formation of individual and collective minds.

Dr [Steven Serels](#) returned to ZMO on 1 June 2023 with a DFG-funded project, titled "A New History of Infectious Diseases in the Southern Red Sea Region". This three-year-long study is the first of its kind to use both archival records and recently generated scientific data to reconstruct the modern history of infectious diseases in the southern Red Sea region. While recognizing that human diseases are biomedical realities mediated through social processes, this project traces the movement of infectious bacteria, viruses and parasites into and across the region as these disease agents pass between human hosts via bodily secretions, such as saliva, breath, semen and faeces.

Dr [Mattin Biglari](#) began an Alexander von Humboldt fellowship in April 2023. His research topic is entitled "Oil, Decolonization and the 'Great Acceleration': A Translocal History of Oil Refining and Environmental Justice in the Western Indian Ocean". His first stay will be until the end of September 2023. He will return during summer 2024 and the second half of 2025.

ZMO also welcomes [Kholoud Said Amer](#) at ZMO as a fellow for one year, starting in August 2023. She is working on women's prisons in Egypt and participates in the Age and Generation unit.



Johannes Becker. Photo: private

From October 2023 on Dr [Johannes Becker](#) is joining ZMO with the three-year DFG-funded project "Migrant arrival contexts in transregional comparison. Local figurations and differing collective histories of Assyrians in Germany and Jordan". This comparative project combines sociological, historical and anthropological perspectives on the emergence and gradual development of migratory communities. Becker acquired master degrees in history and anthropology in Freiburg, Berlin and London and holds a PhD in social sciences from the University of Göttingen.

During the summer, ZMO hosted two fellows as part of its cooperation with the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture. The Oman Research Grant from July to September 2023 was given to Prof [Hilal al-Hajri](#) who worked on the topic envisioning Oman: Orientalism in art. Prof [Nasser Al Saqri](#) from the Sultan Qaboos University received a stipend from the German Oman Foundation and between June and August 2023 worked at ZMO on the history of water management in Northern Oman.



Her Excellency, Mrs Maithaa al-Mahruqi, Dr al-Hajri, Mr Düster and ZMO director Prof Ulrike Freitag.

ZMO was happy to welcome Her Excellency, [Mrs Maithaa al-Mahruqi](#), at ZMO on the occasion of the lecture by Dr Hilal al-Hajri. Dr al-Hajri was this year's Oman Research Grant Holder and on 12 September 2023 gave a presentation titled "Envisioning Oman: Orientalism in Art" ([sioning-oman-orientalism-in-art\). The presentation was attended by a number of local and visiting academics and also attracted a wide online audience.](https://www.zmo.de/veranstaltungen/envi-</p>
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FAREWELL & WELCOME [Lena Herzog](#), the knowledge transfer officer at ZMO since 2019 started a new position at the Berlin University Alliance in mid-August where she will be responsible for transdisciplinary research projects in Berlin. Her successor is [Elisa Nobel-Dilaty](#), starting from mid-September 2023. She studied anthropology and interdisciplinary Middle Eastern studies in Berlin and Cologne. Her master's thesis focused on temporalities in Lebanese cinema. During her studies, she was a student assistant for the Contested Religion unit and ZMO's director. Before joining ZMO, she worked at the Goethe-Institut in Beirut as cultural project coordinator.

[Nico Putz](#), longtime colleague in several positions at ZMO has started a PhD project at the Leibniz Center for Contemporary History Potsdam (ZZF) as part of the Leibniz Collaborative Excellence Project "Crafting Entanglements: Afro-Asian Pasts of the Global Cold War (CRAFTE)", directed by ZMO colleague [Anandita Bajpai](#).

FAREWELL In March, research fellow [Lisa Jöris](#) started as a project manager in the public participation department with the electricity transmission system operator 50 Hertz. During her work there she can build on her doctoral thesis, analyzing the meaning of infrastructure networks in the Syrian city of Aleppo before the beginning of the revolution and war in 2011.

Dr [Jacob Nerenberg](#) left ZMO at the end of June and started a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Leiden in the International Institute of Asian Studies.

Dr [Elad Giladi](#), post-doctoral fellow of the Minerva Stiftung in 2022/2023 at ZMO has taken up a position as a lecturer in the Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies at the University of Haifa, as of August 2023.

[Rakiya El-Matine](#), project coordinator of the projects Remoboko and HISDEMAB, and [Thomas Steinbach](#), DAAD-funded guest researcher at ZMO for nine months, bade farewell at the end of September.

NEWS

AWARDS

ZMO colleague Sagnik Kar was awarded a research student award for his paper "Time guns, time balls and public clocks: the 'publicness' of time in colonial Calcutta in the late 19th–early 20th centuries" by the European Association of South Asian Studies during the 27th European Conference on South Asian Studies (ECSAS), held in Turin, Italy from 26 to 29 July 2023 (see <https://www.easas.eu/easas-events-news/>). Congratulations!

NEWS

INFRASTRUCTURE

At the end of 2022, ZMO was given a remarkable opportunity to apply for financial backing from the Senate of Berlin. This funding aimed not only to enhance ZMO's digital research infrastructure, but also to establish a solid foundation for a planned strategic expansion. By February 2023 we received the good news that the application had been successful.

The ongoing project aimed at advancing ZMO's digital research infrastructure is scheduled to extend until the end of 2023. A team of seven colleagues is actively engaged in pursuing the project's objectives. This undertaking is divided into four key components: the development of an open science policy for ZMO; an inventory of the special collection; Islam in West Africa and Omeka S as a thematic re-

pository; a structural software update of ZMO computers (Alisher Karabaev).

NEWS

ALUMNI



Thiago Pinto Barbosa, who was a research fellow at ZMO from January 2017 to September 2019, successfully defended his PhD at the Faculty of Cultural Studies at the University of Bayreuth in May 2023. His study, "Science and Human Difference in Germany and India: The Production and Circulation of Anthropological Knowledge in Irawati Karve's Work and Legacy", deals with the production and circulation of anthropological knowledge and concepts. It explores the work and legacy of the Indian anthropologist Irawati Karve (1905–1970), who studied at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology (KWI-A) in Berlin from 1927 to 1930. There she began her career in the field of racial research with her book *Normal Asymmetry of the*

Human Skull. Back in India, Irawati Karve later founded and headed the department of anthropology at Pune University. With his PhD, Thiago Pinto Barbosa makes an original and extremely stimulating contribution to the research fields of the history of knowledge and science and the history of Indo-German relations, and to current debates on postcolonialism and decolonization. (Heike Liebau)

CALENDAR

ZMO-Kolloquium 2023/2024:

Materialities of Empire and Nation-State: Experiences in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East: 26 October 2023, 17.00, ZMO: Camille Lefebvre: Materialities of Early Colonial Domination in the Sahel and the Sahara Niger: 1898–1906, <https://www.zmo.de/en/events/talk-camille-lefebvre/lecture-series-47>

Full lecture programme see <https://www.zmo.de/en/events/lecture-series/zmo-colloquium-winter-semester-2023-2024>

9 November 2023, 16.00, MiCT, Brunnenstraße 9, 10119 Berlin / Online: Launch: Islam West Africa Collection, Please register until November 1, 2023, see <https://www.zmo.de/en/events/launch-islam-west-africa-collection>

For further information on ZMO events and activities please visit <https://www.zmo.de/en/events>

Impressum · Orient Bulletin, History, Society and Culture in Asia, the Middle East and Africa published by Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Geisteswissenschaftliche Zentren Berlin e.V. · editorial board: Svenja Becherer, Sonja Hegasy, Kai Kresse

· photos without reference: ZMO · contributors to this edition: Amrita Chattopadhyay · Deepra Dandekar · Vincent Favier · Sonja Hegasy · Stefan B. Kirmse · Kai Kresse · Aksana Ismailbekova · Heike Liebau · Nikolas Olma · Maxwell Omondi Ondieki ·

Samuli Schielke · Alessa Voßkamp · ISSN 2191-3226 (print); 2191-3234 (online) · please require permission for use and reproduction of the content · we welcome your comments: svenja.becherer@zmo.de