



EINLADUNG / AUSHANG

**Inquiring Personal Archives: Itineraries and  
Narratives of West African Combatants in  
the Second World War**

**Lecture by Prof. Brigitte Reinwald (Universität Hannover)**

In memoriam Prof. Gerhard Höpp

Ort: ZMO, Kirchweg 33, 14129 Berlin

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Based on about 40 narrative interviews conducted with Burkinabè ex-servicemen of the French army, veterans of the Second World War and of the French colonial wars in Indochina and Algeria during the 1940s to early 1960s, the lecture attempts to assess some patterns of experience which these men recalled with respect to their being incorporated into the army, their itineraries of combat and imprisonment and the impact of their travelling through war to their post-military lives. It is argued that their stock of knowledge gained by experience and reactivated under particular circumstances, helped them navigating through an uncertain and changing late-colonial and post-colonial situation and to negotiate their position therein.

The focus is on the contextualisation and interpretation of the files that can be constituted from the narrations that allow for glimpses into the personal archives of these men. From here, it is asked, in a wider sense, how experience and memory are interrelated, how memory is structured and socially framed. And lastly, from the men's shared patterns of perception, practice and memory we might possibly conclude to deviant combatant narratives of World War Two.

Prof. Dr. Brigitte Reinwald holds the Chair in African History at the University of Hannover since 2004. Between 1998 and 2004 she was a researcher at the ZMO. Her research interests are among other economic, social and cultural history of Western and Eastern Africa, gender and family relations in French colonial West Africa, Franco-African Military History as well as Migration and Transcultural Processes. In 2005 she published 'Traveling through the War. Experiences and Life Strategies of West African World War Veterans of the French Colonial Army' (ZMO-Studien, Berlin).

Weitere Informationen:

<http://www.hist.uni-hannover.de/lehrende/reinwald/>