



ZMO-Kolloquium

“New Perspectives on Gender and Globalization”

Thursday, 10 December 2009, 6 pm

Male sociality across the Indian Ocean

Lecture by Dr. Filippo Osella

In this lecture Dr. Osella discusses transformations of male sociality in Kozhikode (Calicut), in South India. The ethnography presented here seems to conform to current critical narratives of gender and community: time-honoured forms of male (homo)sociality are marginalized following a moralization of public and private life brought by the spreading of Islamic reformism and neoliberal economic liberalization. A refashioning of familial relations and of expectations of conjugal life, together with a purification of ‘un-Islamic practices’ from same-sex relations indicate the penetration of neo-patriarchal regimes bringing together bourgeois sensibilities and religious morality.

Suggesting a more nuanced reading, Dr Osella argues that styles and modes of Muslim male sociality are produced contextually and contingently, open to slippages, tensions and contradictions, hence ill fitting an all too easy teleology of modernist purification. Actual practices, then, lead us to consider the articulation of different or competing styles which, nevertheless, do not acquire hegemonic status. Secondly, he suggests that (hetero)normative projects produce as much as foreclose complex homosocial spaces according to context, so that local attempts to regulating male intimacies, desires and sexualities within the boundaries of marriage go alongside the proliferation of wider spaces of male hyper-homosociality, produced by the globalization of capital and labour markets. In turn, styles and sensitivities emerging from such apparently spatially dislocated arenas - the Gulf, for example - not only allow for a transformation of male practices back in Kozhikode, but lead to demands for a greater regulation of women’s lives, their sexualities in particular. Thirdly, Osella will suggest that it is only by concealing from analysis the transnational production of gender discourses and practices that one can reduce transformations of male sociality simply, and erroneously, to the unfolding of Islamic reformism. This, in itself, is not an original discovery: plenty of mainstream analyses have underscored how local discourse on gender is produced transnationally. And yet, in privileging a North-Indian/North America/European axis, existing studies have excluded the practices of communities whose diasporic and cultural orientations include the Gulf countries of West Asia.

Dr. Filippo Osella worked - after obtaining a PhD in Anthropology at the London School of Economics in 1993 - at the University of Durham and then joined Sussex in 1999, where he is Reader in Anthropology and Director of the Cultural Studies Interdisciplinary Degree Programme, after obtaining a PhD in Anthropology at the London School of Economics in 1993.

Venue

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GEFÖRDERT VOM



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