



ZMO-Kolloquium 2012

Thursday, April 26th, 2012, 6 pm

What about slaves' voices? Urban migration and social emancipation in twentieth century Gambia

Lecture by Alice Bellagamba

Venue:

Zentrum Moderner Orient
Kirchweg 33

14129 Berlin

Since 2006, together with Sandra Greene and Martin Klein, Alice Bellagamba has carried out a large research project on sources for the study of African slavery, the slave trade, and the course of abolition. Their focus is on materials (and critical ways of reading materials) that shed light on the perspectives and memories of slaves, and of their descendants. One of the problems they have faced is how to access the past of people of slave ancestry when silence on origins has been practiced as a strategy of self-emancipation.

In this contribution, she draw on her ethnographic and historical research along the River Gambia to discuss the use of historical gossips and rumors (which circulate on the side of master descendants) to reconstruct the life trajectories of people of slave ancestry. The historiography of African abolition looks at colonial cities as contexts where freed slaves and slave descendants build up new identities for themselves and their offspring. It is time, as she will explain, to revise this argument. Especially in the first part of the twentieth century, urban migration not always translated into the erasure of a previous slave past.

Alice Bellagamba teaches Political Anthropology and African Studies at the University of Milan-Bicocca. In the recent academic year she is Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies of Berlin. She has carried out long term fieldwork in the Gambia and neighboring Senegal, and she is presently completing a research project based on oral and archival sources on slavery and its aftermath in colonial Gambia.

GEFÖRDERT VOM



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