Colonial Letters and the Contact of Knowledges: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Colonial Correspondences

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Type: Call for Papers
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Location: Germany
Subject Fields: Colonial and Post-Colonial History / Studies, Humanities, Linguistics, Literature, Social Sciences

Conference location: University of Bayreuth, Germany

Written correspondence (e.g. letters, diaries, telegrams, etc.) were one of the major means of communication during the 19\textsuperscript{th} - 20\textsuperscript{th} Century British colonialism of Africa. Through them, the instructions, intensions, decisions, complaints, justifications and agenda of resident British colonial officers, local colonial administrators and collaborators, colonial officials in Britain and colonised subjects (individuals, villages) were transmitted across time and space. These letters offer extraordinary access to the mindset and overall agenda of the entities producing them. The ways of life of these entities, their patterns of social order, repertoires and constellations of knowledges, linguistic voices, world views and cosmologies are projected, both directly and indirectly, in these letters. In themselves, these letters embody the contact zone of colonial-precolonial structures, coloniser-colonised entities, indigenous-foreign knowledges, cultural and linguistic practices, etc.

Letters written during British colonialism of Southern Cameroons were the object of study of the research project “Colonial Letters and the Contact of Knowledges” funded by the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth, Germany (https://www.africamultiple.uni-bayreuth.de/en/Projects/Knowledges/Knowledges_Colonial-letters/index.php). The aim of the conference is to present the major findings of the project. We also invite perspectives on British (and other) colonial correspondences in other territories and periods.

Call for papers

We invite submissions that describe, from multidisciplinary perspectives (within the humanities and social sciences, especially linguistics, history, literature, communication studies, anthropology and sociology), the instantiations of colonial contacts, conflicts, contestations and eventual coalescence, co-habitations and or hybridisations of ‘knowledges’ during colonialism that are embodied in, and transmitted through, letters written during British colonisation of Southern Cameroons (1916-1961) and beyond. Other colonisations,
especially in Africa, form part of the focus of the conference. Several lines of investigation fall within the scope of the conference including, but not limited to:

- Colonial correspondences and the construction of multiple identities
- Colonial correspondences and the discursive enactment of (social, religious, political, hereditary) power
- Colonial correspondences and the coalescence, cohabitation and hybridisation of colonial and precolonial social norms (interaction, hierarchy, respect forms, kinship affiliation)
- Colonial correspondences and the contact of languages
- Colonial correspondences and patterns of language stratification: official, native, local, dialect, etc. languages
- Colonial correspondences and the production, consolidation and contestation of ‘knowledges’
- Colonial correspondences and the role of letter writing agencies
- Colonial correspondences and the concealment of, and access to, knowledge, information and rights
- Colonial correspondences and colonial social and power structures of stratification
- etc.

What patterns of knowledge production are adopted in colonial correspondences? How are these different in letters written by colonial administrators and those written by colonised subjects? What repertoires of knowledges drive their production, rejection and perhaps co-construction? To answer these questions, we invite submissions that adopt multidisciplinary, trans-disciplinary or inter-disciplinary approaches.

**NB: Selected papers from the conference will be published in the series Africa Multiple: Studies of Africa and its Diasporas (Brill Academic Publishers).**

**Submission Guidelines**

- Deadline for receipt of abstracts: **15 December 2022**
- Feedback on abstracts: **31 December 2022**
- Maximum abstract length: **500 words**
- Submit abstracts to: colonial.letters@uni-bayreuth.de

**Partial scholarships**

We offer per diems of up to 300€ (i.e., 100€ per day) for participants whose abstracts are accepted.
More info at: https://colonial-letters.de/

Contact Info:

**Conference organisers**
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