Larissa Förster
Lars Kraume
Goodman Gwasira

Session 2 | 09 Nov 2023 | Genocide and Anthropology in Imperial Germany

Representations of Coloniality and Violence in the Movie "Der vermessene Mensch" / "Measures of Men" (Germany 2023, Lars Kraume)

Register here

The second session of the digital lecture series *Decolonizing Anthropology. A Self-Critical Appraisal of the Current State of Research and Teaching* features a digital discussion about the movie *Der vermessene Mensch / Measures of Men* (Germany 2023; D: Lars Kraume). The film, first introduced at the Berlinale Festival in 2023, sheds light on Germany's colonial crimes and the genocide against Herero and Nama in what today is Namibia. Deutsche Welle summarizes the narrative as follows: „In the movie, a fictional young German ethnologist embarks on a research trip to the colony German South West Africa and begins collecting human skulls for his so-called "racial research." In the process, he witnesses the genocide committed by the "Deutsche Schutztruppe," as the military formation that maintained the German Empire was called, against the Ovaherero and Nama tribes between 1904 and 1908. But beyond witnessing the crimes, the ethnologist increasingly mutates into a perpetrator." The female lead role of Kezia Kambazembi is played by the Namibian actress Girley Charlene Jazamy. An interview with her can be found in the Afro-German online magazine RosaMag.

We are honoured to be able to host the following guests for the discussion: the Director of the movie, Lars Kraume, Dr. Goodman Gwasira from UNAM / the University of Namibia and Dr. Larissa Förster, Professor at Humboldt University of Berlin and head of the *Department for Cultural Goods and Collections from Colonial Contexts* at the German Lost Art Foundation.

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Together with the online participants of the lecture series we will discuss how the film might contribute to filling the void of an active engagement of German publics with the history of German colonialism. Does it support or enable a more active commemoration, education on the topic and more constructive discussions about recognition and reparation? How is the movie perceived by very differently positioned publics and viewers, how is the movie working with privileged perspectives, specific representations and narratives? Why are practices of resistance to colonial rule rather not being addressed? What can we know about the reception of the film in Namibia and Germany to date? What perspective on the history of social and cultural anthropology / ethnology as interwoven with biological anthropology and German racial studies does the film offer? How do we discuss / deal with / take issue with this history today? We would like to point out that on the subject of the genocide of Herrero and Nama, ancestral remains in German museums and restitution, there is also a Namibian documentary by filmmaker Vincent Moloi (Skulls of my people. The Story of the sculls, Namibia 2016), which is highly recommended but unfortunately could not be made available for this session.

Discussants:

Larissa Förster (Humboldt University Berlin)

Larissa Förster is professor at the Department for European Ethnology at Humboldt University Berlin and is a member of the Centre for Anthropological Research on Museums and Heritage (CARMAH) at Humboldt University Berlin. She is a cultural and social anthropologist with a regional focus on Southern Africa and a thematic focus on post-colonial provenance/restitution research, especially with regard to human remains (including those from Namibia). She also is head of the *Department for Cultural Goods and Collections from Colonial Contexts* at the *German Lost Art Foundation* since 2019. Some of her most important publications include: *Postkoloniale Erinnerungslandschaften. Wie Deutsche und Herero des Kriegs von 1904 gedenken* (2010, based on her PhD work), *Haut, Haar und Knochen. Koloniale Spuren*

in naturkundlichen Sammlungen der Universität Jena (2016, co-authored with Holger Stoecker), as well as the co-edited volumes Provenienzforschung zu ethnografischen Sammlungen der Kolonialzeit. Positionen in der aktuellen Debatte (2018) and Museumsethnologie: Eine Einführung. Theorien – Debatten – Praktiken (2019).

Goodman Gwasira (UNAM – University of Namibia)

Goodman Gwasira is a historian of colonial archaeology and an expert on colonial cultural heritages, museum studies, prehistoric art and community engagement in Namibia and South Africa. He is an alumnus of the Culture and Environment in Africa (CEA) study programme at the University of Cologne and the Universities of Namibia and Cape Town. He worked as a curator of archaeology at the National Museum of Namibia. Currently he is a senior lecturer and coordinator of Archaeology and Heritage Studies in the Department of History at the University of Namibia. He also is spart of the international cooperation / project *Confronting Colonial Pasts, Envisioning Creative Futures – Collaborative Conservation and Knowledge Production of the Historical Collections from Namibia.* His PhD investigated the History and critical analysis of Namibia's archaeologies (2020). Goodman Gwasira also published, among many other texts, *Rethinking the archaeology of the Dâures Mountain in a post-colonial context* (2018).

Lars Kraume (the film's director)

Lars Kraume graduated from the Berlin Film School DFFB in 1997 with his award-winning début "Dunckel". Since then, he has worked on 30 television and feature film productions as writer, director or producer. His feature film "Der Staat gegen Fritz Bauer" (The People vs. Fritz Bauer) premièred at the Locarno International Film Festival in summer 2015 and received numerous awards, including seven Lolas at the German Film Awards. He filmed Ferdinand von Schirach's play "Terror" as a spectacular live experiment for which he received the German Television Prize for best director. With "Das schweigende Klassenzimmer" (The Silent Classroom), which

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is also based on historical facts, Kraume moved from West Germany to East Germany, but remained in the same decade, the 1950s. With the feature film "Measures of men" he focuses on one of the first systematic genocides of the 20th century. The film takes some of its inspiration from the novel "Morenga" by Uwe Timm. The title is derived from Jakobus Morenga (also known as Marengo), one of the best-known leaders of the Herero and Nama uprising in German South-West Africa at the beginning of the 20th century.

Further texts for preparation
(with huge thanks to Carla Tiefenbacher, U Cologne and Susanne Hamacher, Übersee-Museum Bremen)

Förster, Larissa / Dag Henrichsen / Holger Stoecker & Hans Axasi-Eichab (2018): Re-individualizing human remains from Namibia: colonialism, grave robbery and intellectual history. In: Human Remains & Violence 4 (2): 45-66.

Hillebrecht, Werner (2009): Hendrik Witbooi and Samuel Maharero: The Ambiguity of Heroes. In: Jeremy Silvester (Hg.): Reviewing Resistance, Liberating History. Windhoek: U of Namibia Press, 38-55.

ISD Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland (2023): Berlinale Film "Der vermessene Mensch": Reproduktion von Anti-Schwarzem Rassismus und eine verpasste Chance deutsche Kolonialgeschichte kritisch aufzuarbeiten. https://isdonline.de/berlinale-film-der-vermessene-mensch/

Mbenzi, Petrus Angula (2009): Revolutionary Songs as a Response to Colonialism in Namibia. In: In: Jeremy Silvester (Hg.): Reviewing Resistance, Liberating History. Windhoek: U of Namibia Press, 71-88.

Verfassungsblog / Constitutional blog) (2022): Debate on Restitution, Colonialism

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and the Courts.
https://verfassungsblog.de/category/debates/restitution-colonialism-and-the-courts-debates/

Zimmerman, Andrew (2001): Chapter 5: A German Republic of Science and a German Die of Truth: Empiricism and Sociability in Anthropology. In: Zimmermann: Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany. Chicago and London: Chicago U Press.

Additional Documentary

Addressing the political, ethical and epistemological issues around ancestral remains in German Museums, Archives and Universities from an Namibian Viewpoint. Unfortunately, we could not get hold of this documentary.

Skulls of my people. The Story of the sculls
Namibia 2016
R: Vincent Moloi

Critical Reviews of the Movie“Measures of Men“

The internet is full of all kinds of reviews, critical, affirmative, contradictory, also international (for example in New York Times, Guardian)

ISD – Initiative Schwarze Deutsche

A Review addressing the reproduction of anti-Black racism and a missed opportunity to critically reappraise German colonial history.
https://isdonline.de/berlinale-film-der-vermessene-mensch/